HOW TO DRAMATIZE BIBLE LESSONS

MARY M. RUSSELL

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HOW TO DRAMATIZE BIBLE LESSONS

MARY M. RUSSELL, B.R.E., A.M.

HOW TO DRAMATIZE BIBLE LESSONS

With a Series of Twelve Dramatized Stories

BY

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FOREWORD

The dramatizations in this volume are not designed for accurate presentation after long and tedious rehearsing. The plays are meant to be suggestive to the teachers of social and religious education. With a little skill the stories can be adapted to many situations.

Within the past few years dramatization has come to be widely used in the public school as a method of instruction. Gradually it is finding its way into the schools of religious education, especially into the week-day schools. But the work is so new and the hours of the teacher so fully occupied that few can find time to select the stories suitable for dramatization and prepare them for the use of the children. To help them in their task is the purpose of this book. It is not the thought of the writer that the stories will be told or acted as they appear in the book.

When a Bible story is acted out in the class-room as an expression of the lesson it is not advisable to have the children attempt to put the speeches into King James English. It is a question in the minds of some whether it is ever wise to do so. So long as the spirit and idea of the story are kept the children may use their own words to reproduce it. In certain stories the boys and girls seem to expect the Biblical form and desire to use it if the story is to be played before an audience. The content of the story and the occasion for its presentation will largely determine the form.

Boys and girls like to recite verses and quotations and to sing hymns and songs from memory. When the story contains good dialogue the children will

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often repeat it verbatim, thus enlarging and improving their vocabularies and forms of expression. When a story is being prepared for public presentation the boys and girls will usually look up the Biblical narrative and introduce when possible the exact words in the Scripture. For this reason the words of the Bible are frequently used in the following dramatizations and whenever possible music and hymns are featured.

M. M. R.

HINTS ON COSTUMING

Many of these stories were prepared for use in Daily Vacation Bible Schools. After being given in the class they were worked over for demonstration at the final session of the school when parents and friends were present. The scenery, costumes and properties were made by the boys and girls with the aid of teachers and parents. For the benefit of those who may desire to use the dramatizations in a similar manner a description of costumes and properties accompanies each story.

Costumes are unnecessary if the stories are dramatized during the class session and given simply as an expression of the lesson. If the story is given at the Daily Vacation Bible School it may be repeated before the entire school or be a feature in the public exhibition given at the close of the term. In that case costumes are needed, but they should be simple. The children under the careful supervision of the teacher should help prepare their costumes. The making of ornaments, properties and articles of apparel may be made a part of the activities during the hand-work period. Care should be taken not to stress the costume. Its purpose is to help the child interpret the character he is taking, not to center his interest on his own appearance. Before the play is given publicly the children should be allowed to wear the costumes in playing the story. This will allow them to become familiar with the costumes and eliminate self-consciousness at the final production.

In each of the following stories suggestions have

been made for the costuming of the characters. In no case is it supposed that the suggestions will be literally followed. They are there for the use of those who are using dramatization constantly and may wish to give occasional elaborate productions. Let it be remembered, however, that the occasion for the presentation of the dramatization will determine the amount of costuming to be used. Sometimes a story can successfully be dramatized without any costumes, again a bit of ribbon, ornament, or drapery will be sufficient to represent the character and to produce the desired atmosphere. Each teacher must be guided by her own situation.

Nothing is definitely known as to the dress of the early Hebrews. The simple lines of the oriental costume have come to be accepted for the Hebraic. The main points to be considered are form and color, as authenticity is out of the question. The underdress should be a straight, one-piece garment. Sometimes the front edge at the waist was carried around and fastened at the center back under the straight loose back piece. At other times it hung straight down or was held in by a girdle of brilliant colors. The outer garment was a long, loose robe, often brightly striped. Suggestions for dress and color may be found in the Tissot pictures. The outer garment may be improvised by taking a striped blanket or couch cover and folding the ends back until they are about ten inches apart. Sew the edges at the top and place them on the person's shoulders, allowing robe to fall loosely. If preferred the blanket or mantle may be draped about the person. Throw one end over the left shoulder; pass the other across the front of the body and under the right arm, then across the back and over the left shoulder.

For the head-dress, a large colored handkerchief or square of striped or colored cloth will answer. One corner of the square is folded under. This edge is placed at the forehead and the cloth falls loosely over the mantle, of the three corners one is over each shoulder and one down the back. The head-dress is kept in place by a coil of rope or black cloth.

Sandals were the common footwear for both men and women. These were strapped about the feet and ankles. Sandals cut from straw matting and bound at the edge with tape and having straps to hold them in place give the oriental effect.

Men and women both wore ornaments of beads, rings and bracelets. The children can easily make gorgeous strings of beads by gilding Kindergarten beads or macaroni and stringing them. Ornaments may be cut from cardboard and covered with silver and gold paper. Very attractive ones may also be made from sealing wax or molding clay. Kings wore crowns and soldiers wore helmets. If a little glue is added to the gold and silver paint it will adhere closely to cloth. The paint, with brush, may be secured at any ten-cent store. Show-card colors, ready to use and inexpensive, may be purchased at the stationer's and can be used on gowns and properties.

It is not necessary to purchase new material for costumes. In fact many costumes should show signs of wear and old material is better. Trunks and wardrobes will often reveal rich treasures. Scarfs, flowers and draperies will achieve extraordinary and delightful results. Aim for effect, not reality. Dramatization should be a joy, not a task that tires and frets. Produce in a spirit of a play and let the stories do their own work with the children.

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HOW TO DRAMATIZE BIBLE LESSONS

HOW TO DRAMATIZE BIBLE LESSONS

I: FROM PRISON TO POWER

OR

JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH *

Story

In the days before the great ships had begun to sail from one country to another carrying their loads of provisions the people had to depend largely upon the crops raised in their own land. If a dry season came and the yield was small hunger and suffering were sure to follow.

Famines occurred even in the land of Egypt which is very fertile because of the River Nile, which not only provides water for the fields but in the spring-time overflows its banks and covers the ground with rich mud. When there are no rains the river is low, the fields suffer, the crops are poor, and people everywhere from Pharaoh on his throne to the poorest worker in the city are frightened lest there be not food enough to last through the winter.

So it was that when one night many years ago Pharaoh had a bad dream about the River Nile he

* The story and dramatization, "Joseph Sold by His Brethren," may be found in "How to Produce Plays and Pageants," p. 53.

was greatly troubled for he believed, as did all the people at that time, that dreams had a meaning and were sent as warnings. In the morning Pharaoh sent for his astrologers and wise men and told them his dream. They listened carefully, but not one of them dared say what the dream meant, for none of them knew. When they were unable to explain Pharaoh began to be very angry.

"What are you here in my court for if you can't help me when I need you?"

In vain the men tried to tell him that his dream was so different from other dreams that they could not understand it. But Pharaoh grew still more angry and ordered the men to be sent to prison.

All the people in the court were terrified at the king's anger. The women huddled together at one side, the men spoke in whispers, even the girls who danced and sang to amuse the king were silent. In a loud voice the king demanded: "Isn't there any one in all my kingdom who can tell me the meaning of my dream?"

Those standing near saw the chief butler give a start of surprise, saw him move as though to go forward, then hesitate as if afraid. After a moment the look of fear left his face and straight to the throne he went. Bowing low before the monarch he said:

"Hear me, O great Pharaoh. It may be that I can tell you of a man able to interpret your dream."

"Speak," commanded Pharaoh.

The butler answered, "Once when Pharaoh was angry with his servants he put me and the chief baker in prison. One night we each had a strange dream. In the morning as we talked together about the dreams we were afraid lest they meant harm to us. While we were talking a young Hebrew slave, named Joseph,

passed by. When he saw us he said, 'Why do you look so sad?' We answered, 'We have each dreamed a dream and there is no one to tell us what they mean.' He replied, 'Perhaps I could tell you. What were your dreams?' When we had told him he told us the meaning. The dreams came true just as Joseph said. When Pharaoh freed me and restored me to my place I was so happy that I forgot all about the poor slave until now. It may be, O Pharaoh, that he would be able to tell the meaning of your dream."

To his servants Pharaoh cried, "Make haste, bring this fellow from the prison."

While the men were gone Pharaoh questioned the butler closely until he had learned all he could about Joseph. He scarcely believed that Joseph could help him, for he asked, "Why should a Hebrew prisoner be able to show the meaning of a dream when my own wise men could not?"

When Joseph was brought in the people were amazed to see so young a man. Pharaoh saw that he was not only young but noble-looking, with a frank, honest face and a keen, clear eye. He liked him at once. He even almost smiled as he said:

"I have dreamed a dream and there is none who can interpret it. The chief butler has told me that you have power to understand dreams and to tell the meanings."

Joseph answered, "It is not in me to know the meaning unless God shall tell me."

Joseph listened as Pharaoh told his dream: "In my dream I stood upon the bank of a river and there came out of the river seven cows, fat and good to look at and they fed in the meadow. Then seven other cows came up after them, poor and lean but the lean cows

ate up the fat ones. Then I dreamed again and I saw seven ears of corn come out on one stalk, fat and good. Then seven other ears, withered and blasted and poor sprang up after them. The seven thin ears devoured the seven fat ones, but after they had eaten they were as poor as before."

After a moment of thinking Joseph began to speak. The court was as quiet as an empty room. Every one wondered if he too would fail. In amazement they listened to his words:

"The dream is one. The two parts have the same meaning. God has showed you what he is about to do. The seven good cows mean seven good years and the seven good ears of corn mean seven good years, too. The seven lean cows and the seven withered ears stand for seven years of famine which shall follow. In that time there shall be no crops and there shall be great suffering. The matter is so important that the dream was doubled and it will shortly come to pass."

Cries and wails and groans filled the room. The people were frantic with fear. Only Pharaoh and Joseph were calm. Pharaoh ordered the people to be silent while he asked Joseph:

"What shall be done to save my people?"

Joseph answered, "Look for a man discreet and wise and set him over all the land of Egypt. Let him gather the grain from all parts of the land and pack it into large storehouses where it shall be kept so that in the years of famine there shall be food and the people will not go hungry."

The plan seemed a good one to Pharaoh and to the people. As they talked of it one of the courtiers approached the great ruler and asked:

"Whom will Pharaoh put in charge of this matter?

Such a one will have great power and must be some one who is loyal to his master."

The man hoped Pharaoh would name him for the office. But Pharaoh pointed to Joseph and asked:

"Where can we find another such man as this? As his God has shown him the meaning of the dream so shall he have charge of the work."

Then looking at Joseph he said: "You shall be ruler in the land and my people shall obey you; only on the throne shall I be greater than you."

Then he ordered garments of fine linen to be brought and put on Joseph. He took a ring from his finger and a gold chain from his neck and put them onto Joseph. Then in a loud voice he announced:

"This Joseph do I proclaim Ruler over the land. Bend the knee!"

The people did as he commanded at the same time shouting, "Long live Joseph."

So Joseph went out to do the work Pharaoh had given him to do and whenever he rode through the streets men ran before him crying, "Bend the knee! Bend the knee!" Gladly the people obeyed for they knew that not only was he Pharaoh's trusted servant but he was the man who was working to keep them and their children from suffering in the days of famine which were ahead of them.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Pharaoh, *Ruler of Egypt.*
Joseph, *a young man, a Hebrew.*
Wise Men (five).
Courtiers.

Chief Butler.
Women.
Men.
Dancing Girls.
Slaves.

PROPERTIES:
Throne for Pharaoh.
Cymbals or tambourines for dancing girls.
Garments for Joseph, gorgeous in color.
Ring.
Gold chain.

PLACE:
Throne room of Pharaoh.

COSTUMES:
Pharaoh: See Houston and Hornblower, "Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian Costumes" or any similar book for suggestions. The Egyptian head-dress is quite different from the Hebrew but easily made from a piece of brown wrapping paper and a few touches of water colors or show-card colors. Even the head of the asp which was worn can be cut from gilt paper and attached to the front of the head-dress with little difficulty. Pharaoh must be gorgeously arrayed in a rich garment and wear jewelry in abundance. A visit to the Art Museum will give one many ideas as to Egyptian ornament and dress. Many of the ornaments may be made by the children from sealing wax, modeling clay and macaroni, gilded and strung.

Wise Men: Beards and white hair. Dark robes with gold-colored girdles.

Egyptians: Bright-colored garments. Much jewelry.
Dancing Girls: Soft thin dresses of delicate colors.
Slaves: Plain one-piece garments of reddish brown.
Joseph: When he first appears Joseph wears the garb of a slave. The garment which Pharaoh puts on him should be ample, completely covering him. It may be held in place in front by the hand.

SCENE I

Pharaoh on the throne. Women at one side whispering together. Courtiers with anxious looks near Pharaoh. Slaves, filled with fear, crouch and cower in rear. Five Wise Men stand before the king.

Pharaoh. [*In angry voice.*] Of what use is your wisdom if it cannot help me when I am in trouble? Many years have I kept you at my court living on my bounty. Now when I need you ye refuse to help me.

Wise Men. Not so, O mighty Pharaoh.

First Wise Man. We would help you if we could.

Pharaoh. You have failed me.

Second Wise Man. Your dream is so strange that we are unable to find its meaning.

Pharaoh. Is it not your business to tell the meaning of signs and wonders? Yet when I tell you my dream you refuse to tell me its meaning.

First Wise Man. We would gladly help you, O Pharaoh, if we were able but the dream is so strange we cannot understand it.

Pharaoh. You dare refuse Pharaoh? [*To slaves.*] Ho, slaves, take these men from my sight. Bind them and cast them into prison.

Butler. [*Starts forward.*] The prison? [*Stands in an attitude of deep thought.*]

Wise Men. [*Fall on faces before king.*] Have mercy, O King, have mercy! Spare us!

Pharaoh. Away with them! I am Pharaoh, I will be obeyed.

[*Servant leads men out.*

Butler. [*Watches men from room, then slowly approaches king; bows low before king.*] Hear me, O great Pharaoh. It may be that I can tell you of a man who is able to interpret your dream.

Pharaoh. Speak.

Butler. Once when Pharaoh was angry with his servants he put me and the chief baker into prison. There one night we dreamed a dream, I and he. Now there was in the prison a young man, a Hebrew, who was called Joseph. Unto him we told our dreams and he interpreted them unto us; and it came to pass as he said. It may be, O worthy Pharaoh, that he would be able to tell the meaning of your dream.

Pharaoh. [*To servants.*] Make haste, bring this Hebrew from the prison. [*Exit servants.*

Butler. He was a bright lad and seemed to have strange power.

Pharaoh. [*Showing signs of anxiety.*] If he cannot tell the meaning of my dream I know not where to look for an interpreter. Why should a Hebrew prisoner be able to show the meaning of a dream when my own wise men could not do so? Who is this man?

Butler. He is a Hebrew called Joseph. He was servant to the keeper of the prison who put all the prisoners under Joseph's care.

Pharaoh. He must be trustworthy.

[*Noise outside; all the people peer out.*

The People. They come, they come. The Hebrew is with them.

[*Enter servants with Joseph held between them.*

All. [*Excitedly.*] The Hebrew! Let the Hebrew hear the dream.

Joseph. Long live Pharaoh! What is it that the King desires of me?

Pharaoh. I have dreamed a dream and there is none that can interpret it. The chief butler has told me that you have power to understand dreams and to show the meaning thereof.

Joseph. It is not in me but it may be that God shall tell me the meaning of the dream.

Pharaoh. In my dream I stood upon the bank of a river and there came out of the river seven cows, fat and good to look at, and they fed in a meadow. Then seven other cows came up after them, poor and lean, and the lean cows ate up the fat ones. Then I dreamed again and I saw seven ears of corn come out on one stalk, fat and good. Then seven other ears, withered and blasted and poor, sprang up after them. I told this dream unto my magicians and wise men, but there was no one who could tell me the meaning thereof. Do you understand it?

Joseph. [*Stands for a moment with bowed head as if in prayer. After a pause in which the people gaze anxiously at him he speaks slowly.*] The dream is one. The two parts have the same meaning. God has showed you what he is about to do. The seven good cows mean seven good years and the seven good ears mean seven good years, too. The seven lean cows and the seven withered ears of corn stand for seven years of famine which shall follow. In that time there shall be no crops and the food supply will be exhausted

and there shall be great suffering. The matter is so important that the dream was double and it shall shortly come to pass as I have said.

Women. [*Wailing.*] What shall we do?

Men. Where shall food be found?

Courtier. Why listen to this foreigner? Who can tell until the seven years be passed whether or not he has told the truth? Surely there is no sign of famine in the land now?

The People. A sign—give us a sign that we may know you speak the truth.

Pharaoh. Silence! I need no sign. I believe. [*To Joseph.*] Tell me, child of the Hebrew, what shall be done to save my people?

Joseph. Look out a man discreet and wise and set him over all the land of Egypt. Let him gather the grain from the east and the west and the north and the south and store it in large storehouses which shall be built to receive it. Then shall there be food in the years of famine and the people shall not be hungry.

Pharaoh. The plan is a good one. It shall be carried out.

Women. [*Clapping hands in excitement.*] There shall be food. We shall not starve.

Courtier. [*Bows before Pharaoh.*] Whom will the king appoint to have charge of the grain? Such a one must be one of Pharaoh's most trusted servants for he will have great power?

Pharaoh. [*Points to Joseph.*] Where can we find another such man as this? Here is a man in whom is the spirit of God. [*To Joseph.*] As your God has showed you the meaning of my dream you shall have charge of the work. You shall be ruler of the land

and my people shall obey you; only on the throne shall I be greater than you.

[*Joseph bows low before Pharaoh.*

Joseph. Pharaoh greatly honors his servant.

Pharaoh. Bring garments of fine linen and put them on Joseph. [*Exeunt servants.*

Dancing Girls. [*Clash cymbals or tambourines.*] Hail to Joseph, the new ruler in the land!

Pharaoh. [*Takes ring from his hand.*] This ring I give you as the sign of authority. [*Puts ring on Joseph's finger.*] This chain [*takes chain from his neck*] I give you as a symbol of my trust in you. [*Puts chain on Joseph's neck.*]

People. Hail to Joseph, the new ruler!

[*Enter servants with garments.*

Pharaoh. Clothe him with linen that he may be equal to Pharaoh.

[*Servants put robe on Joseph.*

Pharaoh. This Joseph do I proclaim Ruler over the land. Bend the knee!

All. [*Bow before Joseph.*] Hail to Joseph, the Ruler over the land.

Pharaoh. [*To Joseph.*] I am Pharaoh and I give unto you control over all the grain in Egypt. Choose your men and give your orders. Whatever you say shall be done. So shall the people of Egypt be saved.

Joseph. [*Bows low before Pharaoh.*] The God of my fathers has caused you to look with favor upon me. May he give me wisdom and strength to serve you well.

Pharaoh. The God who told you the meaning of my dream will help you to serve me and my people. Go forth to your task!

People. Long live Joseph! [*Exit Joseph.*

Pharaoh. It is well. The gods of Egypt—[*pauses, shakes his head, continues in tone of awe and in lowered voice*]—the God of Joseph be praised!

[*Exit Pharaoh.*

People. Long live Pharaoh! Long live Pharaoh and Joseph his servant! [*Exeunt all.*

CURTAIN

II: A REQUEST FOR FOOD AND THE STRANGE REPLY

OR

JOSEPH RECOGNIZES HIS BROTHERS

Story

In the days of long ago Joseph, a Hebrew slave in Egypt, prophesied that for seven years the land would be fruitful, the crops abundant and the people prosperous. Then would follow seven years when nothing would grow in the fields and the people would suffer from lack of food. And it happened exactly as he said. For seven years the harvests were heavy and there was more grain than the people could possibly use, then there followed seven years when nothing grew in the fields. And there was great suffering throughout the eastern countries. Only in Egypt was there food and that was because Pharaoh had believed the words of Joseph and had appointed him ruler over the land to build storehouses and fill them with grain during the years of plenty. Then when the crops failed to grow Joseph opened the storehouses and sold corn to all who came to buy.

In the land of Canaan lived Jacob, an old man, with his eleven sons and their families. He had been greatly worried at the lack of food and feared that some of his people would actually die of hunger. Then one day he learned that there was food in Egypt.

Hastily he summoned his sons to him, told them the news and bade them make ready and go at once into Egypt, bringing back with them all the corn they could buy.

The youngest son, Benjamin, had never been far away from home and when he heard his father's plan he was greatly excited and wanted to go with the others. But his father objected. Benjamin was his youngest son and since years before Joseph, the next to the youngest son and his father's favorite, had never returned after being sent on an errand into the neighboring hills, Jacob had been careful to keep Benjamin close to him. No amount of pleading could gain his permission to let Benjamin go with the others. So it was a disappointed lad who stood with his father in front of their home and watched the ten men start on the long journey into Egypt.

When the brothers entered the storehouse in Egypt they attracted a great deal of attention. From their clothes and speech it was easy to see that they were foreigners. As Joseph looked at them a great lump came in his throat. It had been years since he had seen his brothers but he knew them instantly. Once more in imagination he was back in his father's tent playing with his little brother Benjamin and teasing his elder brothers. Quickly he counted. They were all there but Benjamin and his father. The two he loved best were missing. What did it mean? When he had left home his father was already an old man. Perhaps he was not living now. Eagerly he waited for his brothers to come nearer. Suddenly he realized that they did not know him. Why should they? He was but a country lad when they had sold him as a

slave to a foreign trader. How could they possibly imagine that the dignified governor of the storehouse, clad in rich Egyptian clothes, was their brother?

Then an idea came to Joseph. He would not let his brothers know who he was until he had found out about his father and Benjamin and how his brothers felt toward him and their treatment of him in selling him as a slave. So he spoke roughly to them and asked if they were spies.

"No, my lord," they answered. "We are true men and have come only to buy food. We are twelve brothers, children of one father. One of us is not living, and Benjamin the youngest is at home with our father in Canaan."

How Joseph's heart leaped for joy! His father and his playmate were both alive! But he did not allow his brothers to know how much their words meant to him. Instead he said:

"If this be true, let one of your number be bound and put into prison while the rest of you take food and return to your families. Then come to me again and bring your youngest brother with you."

His words sent terror to the hearts of the men. How could they return to their father with such a message? He had never ceased to mourn the loss of Joseph and they dared not think what might happen when he learned that another son was a prisoner in Egypt and that the governor of the storehouse had declared that they should not have corn when they came again unless Benjamin was with them.

"This evil has come upon us because of the way we treated Joseph," said Gad.

Reuben answered, "Did not I say to you at the

time, 'Do not hurt the child,' but you would not listen."

Then the brothers fell to talking of the wicked thing they did in selling Joseph; how sorry they had been ever since and how they had suffered for their act. Little did they think that Joseph could hear and understand every word, for they thought he was an Egyptian, as he had spoken to them by an interpreter.

Joseph realized that if the brothers kept on talking about him he would surely give himself away. He was not quite ready for them to know who he was so he appeared to be very unfriendly and suspicious of them. He took Simeon, ordered him bound and sent to prison. Then he told the men to go, for their corn was packed and ready for them outside. As they left the room he called after them:

"Remember you shall not see my face when you come again unless your youngest brother be with you."

Sorrowfully the brothers started on their return journey thinking of their aged father and the sad news they had for him. But in the heart of Joseph was great joy for he knew that his father and all of his brothers were living and now after many years he was to see them all again. He began to plan how he might help them during the years of famine and to count the days until he should look into their faces once more.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Jacob, *an old Hebrew.*

Reuben
Simeon
Levi
Judah
Issachar
Zebulun } *Sons of Jacob.*
Dan
Naphtali
Gad
Asher

Benjamin, *youngest son of Jacob.*
Joseph, *Governor of the storehouses in Egypt and long-lost son of Jacob.*
Two men, *servants to Jacob.*
Three Egyptians, *helpers to Joseph.*
Group of Egyptians, *men and women.*

COSTUMES:

The brothers: Long underdress of striped material. Bright colored girdles about waist. Mantles of dark or striped material, fastened to one shoulder and wrapped about the body. The head-piece is a square of bright colored cloth which is worn loosely flowing from the forehead. One corner is folded under for the front, the remaining three corners are one over each shoulder and one down the back. Feet bare or with sandals. Daggers in belts, leathern bags on wrist. Dark beards.

Jacob: Loose, baggy trousers or skirt of dark material reaching to floor; a striped vest; a long flowing cloth coat of some rich color; a high red turban; white hair and beard. Sandals.

Benjamin: A plain burlap gown with short sleeves and reaching a little below the knees. [*Burlap*

bags can be used advantageously.] A bright girdle for the waist. In Act I he may appear bareheaded and barefooted. In Act III he may wear a little, round, tight-fitting cap; he may wear sandals or appear barefooted.

Joseph: A light Egyptian garment with a brilliant girdle tied in front, the ends hanging below the knees. Knitted silk scarfs make excellent girdles. See pictures of aprons for men in Houston and Hornblower, "Ancient Egyptian, Assyrian and Persian Costumes." From the shoulders hangs a gorgeous robe. Bare arms and legs. Much jewelry.

Egyptians: In brighter colors than Hebrews. Characteristic head-dresses. Aim for contrast between Egyptians and Hebrews.

PROPERTIES:

Canvas and poles for tent. Oriental covering inside of tent.

Baskets, Jars } for fruit.

Boxes and bins for grain.

Sacks and baskets carried by Egyptians.

Sacks carried by Hebrews.

PLACES:

Act I. Jacob's home in Canaan.

Act II. A storehouse in Egypt.

ACT I

PLACE: *The tent of Jacob. A piece of awning supported on poles will serve for a tent; a seat over*

which is thrown a covering of some oriental looking cloth is seen within the opening. In front of the tent and at the left are jars and baskets. A servant stands at the entrance.

First Servant. Jacob our master is troubled.

Second Servant. Why should he not be when there is no food in the land? Surely we shall all die.

First Servant. Help must come from somewhere.

[*Enter Benjamin.*

Benjamin. Where is my father? He told me to come here and he would follow.

First Servant. He has not come yet.

Second Servant. [*Looks out.*] He is coming now.

[*Enter Jacob.*

Jacob. [*To servants.*] Bid all my sons come to me.

[*Exeunt servants.*

Benjamin. Father, what has happened? You are excited.

[*Jacob places hand affectionately on Benjamin's shoulder.*

Jacob. I have news, wonderful news. There is corn in Egypt. When the other boys arrive I will tell my plan. [*Enter Reuben, Judah, Simeon.*

Judah. You sent for us, father?

Jacob. I did. Where are your brothers?

[*Enter Levi, Naphtali, Dan.*

Levi. Why are we all here?

Jacob. When all my sons have come I will tell you.

[*Enter Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun.*

Asher. What is the meaning of this summons? Why were we all sent for?

Judah. Father has some news for us. What is it?

Benjamin. Tell them, father. Do not make us wait any longer.

Jacob. [*Puts his arm about Benjamin's shoulders.*] Do not be impatient, lad. I wanted all my boys present before I began to speak so that none of them would miss hearing my words.

Simeon. We are all present. What is it we are to hear.

Jacob. I have heard that there is corn in Egypt.

All. Corn in Egypt?

Jacob. Plenty of it. Go down and buy for us, that we may live and not die.

Judah. Will they sell unto us?

Dan. Surely they will not refuse when they learn that our food is all gone.

Jacob. Why do you look one upon another? Make haste and find food for us lest we starve.

Reuben. Shall we all go?

Jacob. Yes, all of you, that we may have food enough for all your wives and children.

Benjamin. Come, let us start at once. I can hardly wait to see the wonderful land of Egypt and the mighty Nile. [*Starts to leave stage.*]

Jacob. But you cannot go, my child.

Benjamin. Do not say that, father. I want to go, too.

Jacob. I cannot let you go so far away. You must remain with me.

Benjamin. [*Approaches father.*] Oh, my father, do not refuse my request. Let me go.

Simeon. Let the boy go. He is big enough to look out for himself.

Jacob. I cannot let him go lest peradventure mischief befall him.

Benjamin. Why can I never go with my brothers? I am not a baby.

Jacob. [*Caresses him.*] You are my youngest son, the child of Rachel, my wife, who is dead. I would keep you from harm. For a while longer you must be content to remain at home with me.

Gad. You spoil the boy. He will never grow up if you keep him always at home.

Jacob. Rachel is dead; Joseph was killed by wild animals; Benjamin is the child of my old age. I would keep him as long as I can. Go, make ready! Benjamin stays with me.

[*Exeunt all but Jacob and Benjamin.*

Benjamin. Must I always stay behind?

Jacob. There will be plenty of time later for you to do your part. When your brother Joseph was but a boy I allowed him to leave me and go in search of his brothers, but though they were not far from home harm came to him and he never returned to me. It would kill me if harm came to you.

Benjamin. Must I always remain a BOY?

Jacob. You will be a man soon enough. Go and help your brothers prepare for the journey. When all is ready call me. I will give them my blessing ere they depart.

[*Exit Benjamin.*

[*Enter Judah.*

Jacob. Is everything ready?

Judah. Nearly so. Why not let the lad go with us? He wants to see Egypt. It would be a wonderful adventure for him. I'll watch over him and bring him safe home.

Jacob. Do not ask it. He shall not go with you; his brother is dead, and he alone is left me of Rachel's children. If mischief should befall him by the way

in which you go, then would you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.

Judah. Be it so, then. Come and watch us depart for all must now be ready. [*Exeunt Judah and Jacob.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

A storehouse in Egypt. A line of people buying grain. Joseph and three helpers in charge.

First Helper. What would have happened to these people if we had not stored up this corn during the years of plenty?

Second Helper. They would have starved for there is no corn elsewhere. Next!

[*Line moves by. Each person is given a portion.*

Third Helper. Our master, Joseph, has filled our storehouses to overflowing. We shall not suffer.

[*Enter Joseph's brothers.*

First Helper. Look at that group of foreigners.

Second Helper. They have come to buy corn.

Third Helper. [*To Joseph.*] Do you see the foreigners yonder? They have evidently come for corn.

[*Joseph looks at brothers. Is amazed. Steps forward, then back, then turns his back and goes to other side of room. Brothers approach helpers.*

Reuben. We are from the land of Canaan. We heard there was corn in Egypt and we have come to buy food that our wives and children may not perish.

Third Helper. Shall we sell to them?

First Helper. Ask the Governor. It shall be as he says.

[*Third Helper approaches Joseph.*

Third Helper. Sir, these men are from the land of Canaan and are come to buy food. Shall we sell unto them?

[*Joseph approaches brothers. They do not know him and he pretends not to know them.*

Reuben. [*Kneels before Joseph.*] Grant us favor, O Governor of the Storehouses and listen unto our petitions.

Joseph. Where are you from?

All. From the land of Canaan.

Joseph. Why have you come into Egypt?

All. To buy food.

Joseph. You have come from Canaan to buy food in Egypt?

Reuben. Even so, my lord.

Joseph. You are spies. You are not come to buy food but to see the condition of Egypt that you may do us harm.

Simeon. That is not so, my lord, we have come to buy food, even as my brothers have told you.

Joseph. Your BROTHERS? Are all these men your brothers?

Simeon. Yes, we are all brothers, the children of one father.

Joseph. [*Laughs.*] A likely tale. Perhaps you have more brothers at home. Is it so?

Reuben. We are true men, the children of one father. There were twelve sons, the youngest is with our father, one is dead and ten of us are here.

Joseph. Your father? [*Pause.*] Does he still live?

Reuben. He is alive and well but he is an old man. [*Joseph turns his back to his brothers.*] He heard there was food in Egypt and he sent us to buy.

Joseph. [*Faces them.*] You are here for no good purpose. You must be spies.

Dan. We are not spies. We are true men as we have told you. Can you not believe us?

Joseph. Tell me again—is your father well?

Reuben. He is, my lord, but old.

Joseph. You have another brother who is with him?

Reuben. Yes; Benjamin, the youngest of the twelve. Him our father kept with him while we came to Egypt.

Joseph. If you are not spies prove it by this means. If what you have told me is the truth, let one of your number return and fetch your youngest brother that I may see him. The rest of you shall be kept in prison until the messenger returns with the boy.

Judah. We cannot do that.

Joseph. I knew you were spies.

Simeon. We are not spies but we cannot meet with your demands for while we are being kept in prison our families will perish for lack of food.

Joseph. If you are not spies but speak the truth let one of your number remain here in prison while the remainder of you go and carry food for your families. When you return, bringing Benjamin with you and so prove your words true, I will release the one in prison, and you shall all go free.

Simeon. [*To brothers.*] What shall we do?

[*Brothers talk together. Joseph with his back turned to them stands at a little distance but near enough to hear their conversation.*

Gad. This evil has come upon us because of what we did to Joseph.

Reuben. Did not I say unto you at the time, "Do not sin against the child," and you would not hear? Now his blood is required of us.

Asher. We gave no heed to his cry for mercy, now none will be shown to us.

Judah. What are we to do? Our father will never let Benjamin come with us if we return with one boy missing.

Gad. He will have to. There is no other way to secure food.

Levi. If only we had not sold Joseph.

Simeon. It is too late to think of that now. We did it. Now we must pay the penalty.

Joseph. [*Approaches brothers.*] Well, have you reached a decision? Who is to go to prison?

Simeon. I will stay. Let my brothers return with food for our families.

Joseph. It shall be done as I said; when you return with your youngest brother I will set Simeon free.

Reuben. [*In undertone to Judah.*] How did he know Simeon?

Joseph. [*To Helpers.*] Bind this man and take him to prison.

[*Men bind Simeon.*

Joseph. Hold! Show this man every kindness. He is not to be put into the dungeon nor severely dealt with. He is to be held until these men have proved their words to be true. Take him away.

[*Exeunt two men with Simeon.*

Joseph. [*To Third Helper.*] Prepare the corn for these men. [*Exit Helper.*

Judah. How shall we meet our father? Joseph is not, and now Simeon is in prison.

Joseph. Go to your father and your families. Then return unto me in all haste bringing the boy with you for YOU SHALL NOT SEE MY FACE UNLESS YOUR YOUNGEST BROTHER BE WITH YOU. Outside my men wait with the corn for you. Go! [*Exeunt brothers.*

Joseph. [*Paces to and fro in great emotion.*] My father lives and all my brothers! Benjamin, Benjamin, my little brother, shall I really see your face again? [*Sinks into seat, buries his face in his hands.*]

CURTAIN

III: THE TEST

OR

Joseph Reveals Himself to His Brothers

Story

In far-away Hebron an old man paced back and forth before his nine sons. His face was sad and his voice broke when he spoke. Only a little while before these sons had returned from Egypt with corn which they had bought there but they had also brought an unpleasant message to their father. They told him that the governor of the storehouse where the corn was sold had refused to sell them any more unless they brought their youngest brother to him as a pledge of their truthfulness that they were not spies. He had demanded that one of the number remain a prisoner in Egypt until they returned with Benjamin, their youngest brother.

Their father had been very angry at their story and blamed them for telling the governor of their little brother. Jacob, the father, declared that Benjamin should not leave him to go into that foreign land. But now the corn was all gone, and the families of the men were hungry. Jacob begged them to return to Egypt and try to bargain with the governor of the storehouse for even a little corn. This the brothers refused to do unless Benjamin went with them.

It seemed to the old man as if he could not part with the youngest son. But he could think of no

other way to secure the corn. At last he paused in his walking and said, "It shall be as you say. Take the lad and return to Egypt lest we starve." For only in Egypt was there grain. They took honey, spices, nuts and other simple country things as a present to the great governor. They also took double money to pay for the corn, because the money that they paid before had been put back into their sacks.

So they came down to Egypt and into the presence of Joseph, the governor, little dreaming that he was their own brother Joseph whom they thought dead. When Joseph saw them and Benjamin with them he said to the steward:

"Take these men to my house, for they shall dine with me to-day."

The brothers were frightened when they were brought into Joseph's house. They felt sure they were to be made prisoners. They cast themselves down at the feet of the governor and presented him with their gifts. But Joseph treated them kindly and said:

"Is your father well? The old man of whom you told me—is he still alive?"

"Our father is well," they answered.

Then Joseph looked at Benjamin. He could hardly recognize in the stalwart youth before him the little brother who used to follow him about the camp and share in all his play. As if he did not know him, he asked:

"Is this your youngest brother of whom you told me?"

Benjamin bowed low before Joseph and answered, "I am Benjamin, the youngest of my father's children."

Very softly Joseph replied, "May God bless you, my son."

Then to the surprise of the men he hurriedly left the room. They wondered why he had gone. But if they had seen him in his room weeping for joy they would have wondered still more. The familiar sound of his brother Benjamin's voice had awakened memories long forgotten and shaken his self-control so that he dared not stay longer with the men. He wished to find out how his brothers felt toward Benjamin before he made himself known to them.

Joseph said to the steward, "Fill the men's sacks with food and put every man's money into his sack. Also put my silver cup into the sack of the youngest."

The steward did as he was commanded.

The next morning the men were sent on their way. They had not been gone long when Joseph said to his steward:

"Follow those men and bring back the one who has my cup in his sack."

The steward followed and soon overtook the Hebrews. "Why have you stolen my master's cup?" he asked.

Amazed the men looked at him. Each declared that he did not have the cup. Judah said, "If the cup is found in any man's sack that one shall die and all the rest of us will become slaves to your master."

The steward searched the sacks beginning with that of the eldest and ending with that of the youngest. In Benjamin's sack he found the cup just where he had put it the day before.

When he held up the cup before them the brothers

were dumbfounded. They could not understand how it came there. Then in alarm they heard the words of the steward as he pointed at Benjamin:

"This one must return with me to be my master's slave. The rest of you may go on your way."

Of course it was impossible for them to do that. They could not return to their father without Benjamin. Fearful they followed the steward back to the city.

When they came into the presence of Joseph they knelt humbly before him. Joseph spoke to them in a stern voice:

"Why have you returned good for evil? I gave you corn as you asked, provided a feast for you; I sent presents to your aged father, then after you had left I found my silver cup was missing."

Simeon answered, "We cannot explain it, my lord. We only know that none of us took the cup."

Joseph answered, "Let the one in whose sack the cup was found remain as my servant, the rest of you may return to your father."

He wondered if they would go away and leave Benjamin in slavery. Then Benjamin spoke:

"O great ruler, have mercy upon me and let me return unto my father, for I speak truthfully; I do not know how the cup came to be in my sack."

Before Joseph could reply, Judah stepped forward. He put an arm about the heaving shoulders of his little frightened brother, but he spoke to the governor:

"O my lord, hear me, I pray. When first we came to Egypt you asked us if we had a father or a brother. When we answered that one brother, the youngest of the family, was with his father in Hebron, my lord said, 'Bring him down that I may see him.' When

we told our father your request he refused to let the child leave him. It was only when the corn had been used and our children were crying for food that he finally yielded, but his last words were, 'If harm comes to Benjamin you will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave.'

"If we return without the lad my father will surely die. Now, hear my plea. Let me remain as your servant and let Benjamin return with his brothers to my father. Grant me this request for the sake of the old man, my father, who trusted the child to my keeping."

Joseph's heart was touched at Judah's words. He knew then that his brothers had grown better since the day when they sold him as a slave. They had not left Benjamin behind in slavery even when they might have fled. Now Judah had offered to be a slave for life to the Egyptian if he would release Benjamin. He did not need to know any more. To his steward he ordered:

"Clear the room. Let every one but the Hebrews leave me."

As soon as the Egyptians had gone Joseph faced his brothers, held out his hands to them and said in Hebrew:

"I am Joseph! Is my father really alive?"

The men looked at him in amazement. What did he mean? How did this Egyptian know about Joseph? But he was speaking again:

"Come near to me?"

Scarcely knowing what they did they went nearer. His clothes were Egyptian, but his skin was not quite like an Egyptian's, and his eyes—they did seem familiar. Again he spoke:

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

They doubted no longer. He was really their brother whom they had sold and thought dead. Then their amazement turned to fear. Joseph was powerful, next to Pharaoh. He could do anything he wanted to with them. And what punishment could be too severe for the cruel thing they did to him?

Realizing their thoughts Joseph tried to assure them.

"Be not grieved or angry that you sold me into Egypt, for God has taken care of me and raised me to a place where I can help you and save your families from starvation. Think no more of the past. I forgave you long ago. Let us be glad that once more we are together.

Then the brothers crowded around Joseph asking questions and all talking at once. After awhile Joseph said:

"I can hardly wait until I shall see my father. It is impossible for me to leave Egypt now. Make haste. Return to my father and tell him that I am alive. Ask him to come to me with his children and his grandchildren, his flocks, his herds and everything he has. For you shall all live here and I will take care of you, for there are still five years of famine. Go at once. Tell my father all you have seen and bring him to me quickly."

Then Joseph gave them new clothing and wagons and food for their journey and to Benjamin a present of silver and sent them home.

It was not long until Jacob was on his way to Egypt to meet the son he had long thought of as dead. Pharaoh gave the Israelites a fertile tract of land for

their own. Joseph supplied them with food from the storehouse. So a united family they lived and worked together and grew rich and prosperous and happy in their new home. And no one in all the land of Egypt loved Joseph more or rejoiced as much in the honors that came to him as did his own brothers who years ago had sold him as a slave.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Joseph.
His brothers.
Steward, Servant } *Egyptians.*
Egyptian soldiers.

COSTUMES:

Same as in "A Request for Food and a Strange Reply."

PROPERTIES:

Throne for Joseph.

PLACE:

Joseph's Home in Egypt.

SCENE: *Joseph, Ruler of the land of Egypt, sits upon his gilded chair. He seems impatient, he listens, he stands, he waits with air of expectancy.*

[*Enter Steward hastily.*

Joseph. At last! Tell me, did you do as I ordered?

Steward. Yes, my lord. We overtook the Hebrew

shepherds just beyond the city. I said, "Why did you return evil for good and steal my lord's silver cup?" They were very indignant and declared that they had not taken the cup or anything which was not their own.

Joseph. Then what did you do?

Steward. We searched every man's sack beginning with that of the eldest. So sure were they that they did not have it that they agreed that if it was found in any man's sack that man should die and all his brothers should become your servants. Imagine how they felt when we found the cup in the sack of the youngest just where I had hidden it. [*Laughs.*] The poor frightened fellows are standing outside begging to see you.

Joseph. Bring them in.

[*Exit Steward, who returns followed by the eleven frightened brothers guarded by soldiers.*

Joseph. What is this I hear about you? A second time you came for food and I gave it to you. I released your brother who was in prison, I sent presents to the old man, your father, then after you had gone I found my silver cup had gone with you.

Simeon. We know not how it happened, my lord, that the cup was in Benjamin's sack, but this we do know, none of us took the cup.

Steward. How came it in his sack then?

Judah. None of us know. [*To Joseph.*] I swear unto you, my lord, that we are all honest men and none of us stole the cup.

Joseph. Well, well, I'll be easy with you this time. You shall not all suffer. The one in whose sack the cup was found must remain as my servant, but the rest of you may return to your father.

Brothers. [*In despair wring their hands and gaze at one another.*] We cannot do that.

Simeon. This is our punishment for what we did to Joseph. We sold him as a slave and now when we would save Benjamin from the very same fate we are powerless.

Joseph. Let the man in whose sack the cup was found come before me.

[*Benjamin, fearful and ashamed, approaches and bows low before Joseph.*

Benjamin. O great Ruler in Egypt, I am Benjamin, the youngest. In my sack was the cup found, but I do not know how it came there. Believe me, my lord, I did not do this wrong. [*Pleadingly, lifting eyes to Joseph.*] O great Ruler, have mercy on me. Let me return to my father in Canaan.

[*Joseph, affected by Benjamin's plea, turns his face away. Judah approaches, kneels beside Benjamin, placing an arm about him for comfort.*

Judah. [*To Joseph.*] O my lord, let me, I pray, speak a word in your ear and be not angry with me. When first we came to Egypt you asked us, "Have you a father or a brother?" We answered, "We have a father, an old man, and a child of his old age, a little one; his brother is dead and he alone is left of his mother, Rachel, and his father loves him." And my lord answered, "Bring him down unto me that I may see him." We said, "The lad cannot leave his father." But you said, "Except your youngest brother comes down with you, you shall not see me again." When we told our father your words he said, "You know that my second wife Rachel was the mother of two sons only; one was torn in pieces by wild animals; now

if you take this one from me and harm comes to him you shall bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." Now if we return to our father and Benjamin is not with us the aged man will surely die, for his life is bound up in the lad's. When we left home I said unto my father, "If I bring the lad not unto you again then shall I bear the blame forever." Now, I pray, O great ruler in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh, let me remain as your servant and let the lad, Benjamin, return with his brothers to my father. For how shall I go up to my father and the lad be not with me?

Joseph. [*Rising. In surprise.*] You would do this? You would give yourself into bondage and become my servant to save your little brother?

Judah. That is what I mean. I will serve you faithfully all the days of my life if only you will let the lad go back to his father.

Joseph. [*Overcome with emotion turns his back to his brothers. Then to Steward.*] Cause every man but the Hebrews to go out of the room.

[*Exeunt Steward and soldiers.*

Joseph. [*Turns toward brothers and extends arms.*] I am Joseph. Does my father yet live?

[*Brothers look at him in amazement.*

Joseph. [*Steps down off platform.*] Do you not understand I am Joseph, your brother whom ye sold into Egypt.

Brothers. [*Terrified.*] No, no.

[*Fall with faces to ground.*

Joseph. Fear not, my brothers. I do not wish you harm. Come near to me. [*Men rise slowly to feet and face Joseph.*] Be not grieved or angry with yourselves that you sold me, for everything has turned

out for our good. God has been with me and raised me to a place where I can help you and keep your families from starving for the famine will last five years more. You must bring my father and all your children and come and live in Egypt where there is plenty. Think no more of the past but let us be happy because God had brought us together once more. [*Holding out his arms to Benjamin.*] Benjamin, my brother!

[*Benjamin runs into his arms. All the other brothers crowd around, excited, laughing, but somewhat embarrassed. One by one Joseph greets them all.*

Dan. Are we really forgiven?

Joseph. Long ago.

Gad. Did you know us that first day?

Joseph. The moment I saw you. I had the money and the cup hidden in your sacks that I might test you. When Judah made his plea for Benjamin I had my answer. I could wait no longer. I had to tell you who it was that spoke to you.

Simeon. We can hardly believe you even now.

Joseph. Only one thing more is needed to complete my happiness.

Benjamin. I know—to see our father.

Joseph. You are right. To look into my father's face once more, to feel his hand on my head in blessing. To hear his voice speaking unto me is the dearest wish of my life.

Reuben. He still loves you dearly and has not ceased to grieve for you all these years.

Joseph. Make haste and return to my father. Tell him that I am alive and that the Lord has made me ruler over all Egypt. Tell him all you have seen.

Bring him to me for I cannot leave Egypt. When you come again you are to remain until the famine is over, that you and your families shall not suffer.

Reuben. Will our father believe us when we tell our story?

Joseph. When he has listened to you all and has seen the presents I am sending him he will believe. Only make haste and bring him to me.

Judah. We will go at once.

Joseph. Take care that no harm comes to you by the way.

[*Brothers bid Joseph farewell, passing in line before him. Benjamin last. Exeunt all but Benjamin, who turns at exit and looks back.*

Joseph. [*Extending arms toward him.*] My little brother!

Benjamin. [*Rushes back, kneels before Joseph, kisses hem of his robe.*] My noble brother!

Joseph. Rise! You must not kneel to me. We are brothers as in the days of our childhood. [*Puts hand on Benjamin's shoulder.*] My little brother Benjamin. I wish I did not have to part with you even for a day, but our father would be anxious if you did not return.

Benjamin. [*Stepping away.*] I must not keep the others waiting. Farewell. [*Goes to entrance. Turns and faces Joseph.*] Our father will believe you are alive when I tell him. He won't be able to help it. Farewell till I bring him to you. [*Exit Benjamin.*

Joseph. [*Softly.*] My father and brothers alive and with me! [*Enter Servant.*

Servant. Pharaoh has heard the good news, my lord. He has ordered wagons to be sent into Canaan that the women and children may make the journey to

Egypt in comfort. He has also sent an abundance of food and rich gifts to your father. He bids you come to him that he may plan with you for their future homes.

Joseph. He is ever kind and thoughtful. I will go to him at once. [*Pauses.*] Strange, strange how things have worked out for us all.

[*Exit Joseph, followed by Servant.*

CURTAIN

IV: A LEADER IN THE MAKING

OR

How Joshua Came To Be a Leader

Story

Many hundreds of years ago when the children of Israel were living as slaves to the Egyptians the leading men were suddenly called together to hear a very important message. Moses, one of their fellow-countrymen, told them through his brother Aaron that Jehovah knew of their afflictions and had commanded him to lead them forth from a land of bondage to a land of freedom.

There was great rejoicing among the Hebrews, but to one young man in particular the day was one of peculiar significance. Joshua, the son of Nun, was chosen by Moses to be his special servant and helper. Joshua was an ambitious young man, and he had been longing for a chance to serve his nation. He would gladly have risen up against the Egyptians if the people would have fought. But they seemed to have become almost deadened by their undeserved sufferings—so they suffered and waited for some great plan of deliverance. Joshua had to content himself with being just a servant to the chosen leader. "Sometime," he thought, "I want to be a great man like my master. I would like to be true to my name which means 'savior.'"

In the years that followed as they journeyed toward

Canaan he not only grew to respect and admire his master but he began to love him very deeply. He tried his best to be of real service to him. He sorrowed, when the people distrusting Jehovah, murmured to Moses desiring to return to Egypt. He wondered at the patience and self-control which Moses exhibited. Surely, it was a mighty task leading a great number of people on so long a journey through so many years; to discipline them, to encourage them, to help them believe and trust in Jehovah their God.

One day Joshua and eleven other men were chosen to go forward into the land of Canaan to spy it out. After forty days they returned. All reported that the land was a good one and a fruitful one, but ten of the spies said that the inhabitants were very strong and powerful and that the children of Israel would not be able to conquer them. Whereupon the people began to mourn and to rebel and proposed choosing a new captain to lead them back to Egypt.

Moses was discouraged and hurt at their lack of courage. Joshua could not bear to see the people treat Moses so cruelly. Quickly he rushed into their midst and ordered the people to listen to him. Something in his voice and manner made the people grow silent. In a strong voice Joshua said, "The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If Jehovah delights in us then he will bring us into this land and give it to us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land."

The mob was not in sympathy with the words of Joshua and wanted to stone him and Caleb, who said Joshua had told the truth. For a while everything was in confusion, the people shouted, Moses and Aaron

tried in vain to quiet them, even thunder was heard in the heavens. At last quiet was restored. Moses told them that because of their rebellion they must spend their days in the Wilderness. Only Joshua and Caleb of all the people present would be allowed to enter the Promised Land. Then the people were sorry for what they had said and done and promised to follow Moses if he would only lead them into Canaan, but Moses told them that it was impossible for him to do so. Perhaps when he saw how disappointed they were he was sorry for them for he told them that he himself would also die in the wilderness and would never go into the Promised Land.

Then he surprised them by announcing that Joshua would be his successor and would some day lead their sons and daughters into a land of plenty. No sooner had he spoken the words than Miriam broke into song, urging the Israelites to trust in the Lord and prophesying a splendid future for Joshua. Years afterwards her words came true, for Joshua became one of the mightiest leaders Israel ever had.

Dramatization

(For older boys and girls.)

CHARACTERS:

Moses, *an elderly prophet.*
Aaron, *his brother, about the same age.*
Joshua, *a young man.*
Caleb, *his friend.*
Abijah, *an impatient, inquisitive man.*
Eleazar, *an old man.*
Joash.

Miriam, *a prophetess, sister to Moses and Aaron.*

Ammiel
Shaphat
Igal
Genel
Sethur
Joshua
Caleb
Five other men
} *Spies.*

Group of women.

COSTUMES:

Spies. Costumes for the spies may be made of burlap bags which grocers will usually gladly donate. One end of the bag is left open while in the opposite end a space large enough to insert the head is made. Openings in the side are made for the arms. A piece of rope tied round the waist finishes the garment. A piece of colored cloth wrapped around the head will serve for a head-dress. Sandals may be worn or the men may be barefooted. Each should carry a heavy stick and a pack, blanket, bag or basket. The men should appear dusty, travel-worn and tired.

Moses. A purple mantle over a black undergarment, a flowing head-dress, sandals. He should wear a beard and be made up as an old man.

Aaron. Similar to Moses but with a less attractive costume.

Israelites. Ordinary oriental costumes, couch covers, blankets and shawls answer the purpose of mantles; cambric or cheese cloth for head-dress. Beards made from black mosquito netting or from

lamb's wool dyed black may be used for men in the group.

Miriam and Women. Loose, flowing robes of colored cheese cloth. Hair flowing, adorned with veils or ribbons.

PROPERTIES:

Baskets of fruits for spies.
Fruit, at least a few real grapes or figs which may be eaten.
Sticks, used by spies in traveling.
Rods, about two feet long, gilded for Moses and Aaron.
Cymbals or tambourine for Miriam.
Drum or sheet of zinc for thunder.
Flashlights for lighting.

SCENE I

An isolated spot outside the town. Only a plain wall or back-drop is needed as the stage will be filled with people most of the time. If, however, it is desired to have scenery, a wall about four feet high made of wall-board or cloth may be used for the background. This may be painted to represent tile or it may be covered with gray paper and marked off with black to suggest stones. Sand may cover the platform.

As the curtain is raised a group of Israelites are seen talking excitedly together. Others continue to join them as the following conversation takes place.

Sethur. What is this meeting for?

Abijah. What does Moses want of us, now?

Igal. I don't know. [*Enter three men.*

Abijah. [*Approaching men.*] What word did Moses send to you?

Men. To meet him here.

Abijah. [*To two other men.*] What did he tell you?

Two Men. The same—to meet him here.

Abijah. I wish I knew what he wanted.

Caleb. Joshua thinks he will tell us of a plan to free Israel from the Egyptians.

Joash. Joshua is always thinking of getting us free from the Egyptians.

Igal. We shall never be free.

Joash. The power of Israel is too strong.

Caleb. Joshua thinks that if we would all work together we could gain our freedom.

Eleazar. Joshua is young and to him everything seems possible. I was young once and I, too, dreamed of Israel being free but now I am older [*shakes his head slowly*] I know there is no hope.

Joash. Surely a deliverer will some day be sent to free us. We are Jehovah's chosen people. Surely he will not allow us always to remain slaves.

Eleazar. In his own good time he may send us a leader. I know not when.

Caleb. Who knows? Perhaps he will come in our day!

Eleazar. Thou art young too, like Joshua, and full of dreams. [*Enter Joshua.*

Caleb. Here is Joshua now. [*To Joshua.*] Hail to thee, Joshua; all hail.

All. Greetings to thee.

Joshua. [*Looking about.*] Where is Moses?

Joash. He has not yet come.

Joshua. I can hardly wait to hear his message. I am sure he has wonderful news for us. [*To Eleazar.*] Dost thou think the time has come when Israel is to gain her freedom?

Eleazar. [*Chidingly.*] Lad, lad, thou art ever thinking of Israel being free.

Joshua. Why shouldn't I? Israel needs to be free. If she would follow a great leader she could surely win her freedom.

Joash. Never fear. When the leader comes Israel will follow him.

Joshua. I think he has come. Moses is our leader and I think he is a great man.

Caleb. Here he comes. [*Enter Moses.*

All. Moses, Moses!

Joshua. Moses, our leader! Long live Moses!

All. Long live Moses!

Moses. [*Lifting hand.*] Cease, cease.

Abijah. Moses, why are we here? Why didst you summons all of us?

Moses. I wished to talk to you all together. [*Looking over group.*] Are all the men assembled?

Eleazar. All who dared to come. Some of our men could not escape the watchful eye of the taskmasters.

Moses. [*Sadly.*] I know, I know.

Caleb. Whatever thou shalt say unto us we will tell to the others.

Moses. It is well. The message is for all the men of Israel. Aaron will tell you what it is for he can speak better than I.

All. Aaron, Aaron. Come forward.

[*Aaron comes forward. Sound of singing off-stage.*

Eleazar. Who is coming?

Moses. It is Miriam. I bade her come and bring the women for I would have every one know the message.

[*Enter Miriam and the women. Miriam, and if possible some of the others, should have tambourines or cymbals.*

Miriam. We are here at thy command, my lord. Hath Aaron told the wonderful news yet?

Moses. He is ready now. Listen all ye who serve the God of Israel. [*To Aaron.*] Speak, for we dare not remain here long, lest Pharaoh's officers discover us.

Aaron. At last Jehovah hath heard the prayers of his people. He hath given ear unto their cry. He hath commanded Moses to be their leader, to lead this people forth out of the land of bondage into the promised land of freedom.

Joshua. [*Excitedly.*] At last, at last! I knew the time would come. All hail to Moses, our leader!

All. Moses, Moses, our leader!

Moses. [*To Joshua.*] Ah, Joshua, thy faith hath been rewarded. Thou shalt see the Promised Land. Thou art strong and very courageous. I have need for such a man. Thou shalt be my special servant and helper. Thou shalt go with me to do my errands and to aid me in serving this people.

Joshua. [*Falling to knees and grasping Moses' hand.*] O my lord, what have I done that such honor should come to me?

Moses. Thou wast trustworthy and honest all the days of thy childhood. As a young man thou hast been courageous and upright. There is always a place for such a one.

Joshua. I will serve thee faithfully and try in all things to do thy commands.

Moses. Thou hast a good name, "Joshua." It means "savior." Thou must help me to save this people, to rescue them from the bondage of Egypt and to save them from themselves.

Joshua. What meanest thou, "To save them from themselves"?

Moses. Sometimes I am afraid lest they become reconciled to their lot and spend their days in ceaseless grumbling, never striving to change their conditions. Thou shalt inspire them to win their freedom.

Joshua. I will strive to follow thy leading that I may be worthy of thy trust. [*Rises.*]

Moses. [*To men.*] Now let us separate. Each man must tell his neighbor, each must encourage the other for the time of deliverance is at hand. Let us arise in the strength of Jehovah for he will lead us aright.

Miriam. [*Chants.*]

"Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers;
The snare is broken and we are escaped.
Our help is in the name of Jehovah,
Who made heaven and earth."

[*If desired a hymn or song of praise may be substituted.*

All. Praise be to Jehovah, who hath not forsaken his people.

Joshua. Praise be to Moses, Joshua's chosen servant and leader.

Caleb. All hail to Joshua, Moses' chosen servant and helper.

All. Joshua, Joshua!

Caleb. Who knows but he himself may be a leader some day and lead Israel on to greater glory!

All. Joshua, Joshua. All hail to Joshua, Israel's future leader.

Joash. Let us go at once and spread the news.

All. Aye, aye, let us go.

[*Exeunt all but Moses and Joshua.*

Moses. [*Places hand on Joshua's shoulder.*] My son, a great future lies before thee. Only be true and faithful for thy work awaits thee. These are days of preparation, make the most of them.

Joshua. I will strive to do so with thy help.

[*Exeunt Moses and Joshua.*

CURTAIN

SCENE II

In the wilderness of Paran.

TIME: *Some months later than Scene I. The Israelites have escaped from Egypt and are in the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. Trees and rocks may be used for scenery or the stage may be left bare.*

The curtain rises on an empty stage. Spies, laden with fruit, vegetables, etc., enter and advance toward center of stage.

Ammiel. [*Putting down load.*] I am tired.

[*Others stop moving.*

Shaphat. I for one am glad to be at home again.

Igal. We are fortunate to be alive.

Genel. I don't believe I care to visit any more foreign countries.

Sethur. Foreigners are all treacherous. We escaped this time but we might not be so fortunate another time. It was a foolish errand.

Joshua. Not so. Did not Moses, our leader, tell us to go up into Canaan to see what kind of land was there. Whether it was fertile or wooded and rocky? To see whether the people were strong or weak, many or few, whether they lived in tents or in strongholds, scattered or in cities?

Caleb. Wasn't it wise for us to go first and spy out the land and report to Moses so that he might know the best way to enter the land and into what cities to lead the children of Israel?

Sethur. He will never lead the children of Israel into any of the cities we saw.

Joshua. Why not?

Sethur. Israel would have small chance with those foreigners. Why, we should all be killed before we could make a stand.

Caleb. You are tired or you would not so lightly value the power of your countrymen.

[*Shouting off-stage.*

Ammiel. The people—they have seen us.

Shaphat. They are coming. Let us wait for them. Our burdens are heavy.

[*People enter, greet the spies joyfully, all talking and laughing together as a group would naturally do in similar circumstances.*

Joash. Welcome, welcome home! The forty days you were gone away seemed very long. We have watched every day for your return.

Second Israelite. Look at the fruit!

First Israelite. Tell us of your experiences.

Joshua. [*Who has been watching the entrance.*] Moses is coming.

[*Enter Moses. Men stop talking.*

Moses. [*To spies, who are all standing in one group save Joshua who is beside Moses.*] Welcome back, my children. Thanks be to God who hath preserved you from harm and brought you safe home.

Israelites. Thanks be to God.

Moses. Tell us of your wanderings and show us the things ye have brought back with you.

Shaphat. We came into the land whither thou didst send us and surely it floweth with milk and honey; this is the fruit we found.

[*Men exhibit their fruit.*

Eleazar. Such grapes have I never seen before!

Joash. None such grew in Egypt.

Ammiel. These pomegranates are of unusual size, too.

Sethur. They are very sweet. Taste them.

[*Passes them first to Moses, then to Israelites who are nearest.*

Genel. Look at the figs I brought. Are they not luscious? [*Men all look at his basket.*

Moses. Surely it must be a fertile land. Tell us of the people.

Sethur. It is true that the land is fertile and the fruit bountiful and gladly would we have the children of Israel enjoy it. But the people that dwell in the land are powerful and the cities strong. There is no place for us.

Genel. The people we saw were as big as giants. Israel could not stand against them.

Ammiel. Their cities are surrounded by high walls.

Igal. They must have ways of fighting that are unknown to us.

Shaphat. The Israelites would be killed and our race perish if we should try to enter Canaan.

[*Men all look very serious.*

Caleb. [*Advancing toward Moses.*] Hear me, my lord. It is true that the cities are strong and the people mighty, but we are able to overcome them. Let us go up and possess the land.

Joshua. It is even as Caleb hath said.

Eight Spies. Nay, nay, listen not unto them.

Sethur. All the men we saw were like giants; we would seem like grasshoppers in their sight. It would be foolish for us to attempt to fight them.

Genel. He is right. We are not able to fight those foreigners. They are stronger than we.

Israelites. [*Lamentation and confusion.*] Woe, woe, woe unto us.

First Israelite. Would God we had died in this wilderness!

Second Israelite. Would God we had died in Egypt!

Third Israelite. Egypt, Egypt. Would God we were there now!

Fourth Israelite. We had food there and houses in which to live.

Eleazar. Wherefore hath the Lord brought us into this land to fall by the sword.

Fifth Israelite. Our wives and our children will die of starvation.

Third Israelite. Let us return unto Egypt.

Israelites. Egypt, Egypt. Let us return unto Egypt. [*Shouting and confusion follow.*

Third Israelite. Let us choose a captain and return unto Egypt.

Moses. Men, men, listen unto me.

Men. Egypt, Egypt!

Aaron. [*Stepping to Moses' side.*] Stop your clamoring and listen unto Moses.

Third Israelite. We want a captain to lead us into Egypt, not a man to lead us unto death.

All. A captain, a captain!

[*Moses and Aaron rend their garments.*

Joshua. [*Rushing into the mob.*] Peace, peace. Hearken unto me. Hearken unto me! [*Mob grows quiet.*] The land which we passed through to search is an exceeding good land. Surely we can overcome the people and possess it, for the Lord will fight for us.

Caleb. The land is rich and plentiful. We need it for our families. Fear not the people who live there for the Lord is with us. Let us arise and go forward!

Sethur. Listen not unto them.

Shaphat. They are mad. Believe them not.

[*If it is possible to change the lighting it should be gradually lessened from now on. If there is no such equipment the darkness may be left to the imagination.*

Israelites. Stone them, stone them!

[*Darkness increasing.*

Sethur. They speak lying words. They would send you to your death.

[*Darkness, lightning, thunder. If there is no way of gradually reducing the light it may all be turned off at this point. The thunder can be produced by the use of a drum or rapid moving of a piece of zinc, attached by one end to wall. Most any boy will know how and be glad to make the thunder. The people, in*

terror, draw near together. They arrange themselves so that eight spies stand in one group. Joshua and Caleb remain near Moses and Aaron.

People. Oh, oh, oh! [*Thunder.*

Eleazar. A sign! [*Thunder.*

People. [*Covering ears.*] A sign!

Aaron. Jehovah is angry.

Moses. [*Facing mob.*] How often will ye murmur against Jehovah and against his chosen servants? [*Thunder.*] Who have given the true report, Caleb and Joshua or those men? [*Points to eight spies huddled together in fear.*] Look at Joshua and Caleb! Are they afraid? They have done no wrong. They fear not the thunder. They know it is not sent as a punishment for them. [*Thunder.*

Aaron. Jehovah is angry at your complaints. Hath he not shown you signs and wonders? Did he not allow you to escape from the hands of the Egyptians? Yet ye would return to make bricks, to be beaten, to have your children become slaves! Do not your hearts condemn you? [*Silence.*] How many of you still wish to return to Egypt? [*Silence.*

Eleazar. We have sinned. [*Distant thunder.*

Aaron. Jehovah is long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgressions. It may be that in his great mercy he will forgive this rebellion and bless you once more. [*Very distant thunder.*

Eleazar. We have sinned.

Moses. For your murmurings and your complaints ye shall suffer. To-morrow we turn back into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. Never again shall I offer to lead you into the Promised Land. Ye

who are old will die in the wilderness. Your eyes shall not even behold the land of your desire.

Israelites. Nay, nay, lead us on. We will follow.

[*Distant thunder.*

Moses. It shall be as I have said. As long as I am with you we shall remain in the wilderness. I shall not attempt to lead you out of it lest Jehovah be angry and destroy us.

All. Woe, woe, woe!

Moses. If ye repent it may be that your children will enter the land of Canaan. I am now an old man. I have tried to lead you as the Lord hath showed the way but ye have not been satisfied. Ye have found fault and complained. Soon I shall be laid to rest and then another who is young and strong and very courageous will take my place. If your children obey his word and follow his command he will surely take them out of this wilderness into a land of plenty.

Eleazar. Who is this man of whom thou speakest?

Moses. Canst thou not guess? [*Turns and places hand on Joshua's shoulder.*] Joshua, the son of Nun, shall be the leader of Israel and Caleb shall be his helper even as Joshua hath been mine.

Spies. [*In surprise.*] Joshua?

Moses. Now return unto your tents. To-morrow we start for the wilderness.

[*Men leave stage sorrowfully.*

Men. We have sinned, we have sinned!

Miriam. [*Off-stage. Chants with sound of music.*] Now, therefore, O Israel, remember the statutes of Jehovah, that your children may go in and possess the land. Take heed to yourselves and keep his word diligently lest ye forget the things which your eyes

have seen. But teach them to thy sons and to thy sons' sons. And may the Lord be merciful unto you.

[*Enter Miriam.*

Miriam. [*To Joshua.*] Hail to Joshua, the future leader of Israel! [*Chants.*] Be strong and of good courage for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which Jehovah swore unto their fathers to give them. [*Joshua bows his head.*] Only be strong and very courageous and remember to observe the law according to the words of Moses, the servant of Jehovah. Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed, for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

Moses. [*To Joshua.*] The Lord be with thee and with thy helper.

Aaron. The Lord be with thee.

[*Exeunt Moses with Joshua, Aaron with Caleb.*

Miriam. The Lord be with thee as he has been with Moses, his servant. Amen and amen.

CURTAIN

V: A SURPRISING COMMAND FROM A VISITOR

OR

Gideon's Commission

Story

One autumn day many, many years ago in a country far across the sea, a farmer named Gideon, with his father Joash and a few friends, was secretly threshing wheat in a secluded spot hidden by rocks. As they worked a group of women under a near-by tree sang to encourage the men, at the same time keeping watch lest their enemies, the Midianites, should discover them and take their grain away.

The Midianites were fierce Bedouin robbers who came on their swift camels at harvest time and swept the country clean. Sometimes they would come early in the summer and destroy the growing grain and drive the people from their homes. In the land of Manasseh where Gideon lived there were no walled cities, so it was easy for these fierce bands to sweep through the country taking what they wanted and destroying the remainder. Many of the people had been forced to live in caves and dens which they made out in the country.

As the men worked they talked of their poverty and sufferings, the days of their fathers when Israel was prosperous and happy. Suddenly Gideon spoke, "I believe that much of our suffering is a punishment

because so many of the Israelites have forgotten the Lord and all his kindness to them in the past. Now they are following their heathen neighbors and are worshiping their idol, Baal."

Some of the men thought that Israel would never be able to help herself but must wait until a great leader should come to her aid. Phurah, who greatly admired Gideon, turned to him and asked, "Where can be found a greater man than thou? Surely all Israel would follow thee. Be our deliverer and free us from our enemies."

Gideon only laughed and said, "I am but a poor farmer, not a mighty warrior. I will gladly follow the leader when he comes and do anything I can to help my people. All I can do just now is to save this wheat so that we shall not starve."

Even while the men were talking a stranger appeared under the big oak tree near by. She looked like a beautiful woman, but the men were sure she must be an angel. Frightened they fell on their faces on the ground. The stranger called, "Gideon, Gideon, be not afraid. The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour."

Gideon answered, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this trouble come to us? The Lord hath cast us off and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."

The angel replied, "Go, in thy might, and save Israel."

Gideon was amazed at her words and asked, "How shall I save Israel? My family is the poorest in Manasseh and I am the least in my father's house."

But the angel said, "Have not I sent thee? Surely the Lord will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites."

It was hard for Gideon to believe that such a thing could happen. In order to make sure he said, "If I have found favour in thy sight show me a sign. Go not away until I come back bringing a present for thee."

The visitor answered, "I will stay until thou shalt return."

Gideon went away and killed a goat and put the meat in a basket. Then taking some bread with it he returned to the angel.

When the angel saw what he had brought, she said, "Take some of the meat and some of the bread and place them on that rock yonder." Gideon did as she said. Then the angel went over to the rock, bent over the present Gideon had brought and touched it with a staff she had in her hand. As the men watched they saw a strange sight; fire appeared on the rock where the bread and meat lay.

Gideon cried out, "Alas, I shall surely die, for I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face."

The men were terrified and fell on their knees to the ground.

The angel said, "Peace be unto thee; fear not, thou shalt not die."

The men were too frightened to believe her words but waited, dreading what might happen but scarce knowing what to expect. After a moment when nothing occurred Gideon raised his head. In amazement he sat up, then he stood up and looked around. The angel was gone. He and his men were alone as they had been a little while before. He spoke to the men, "Fear not, we are alone."

One by one the men arose. In hushed voices they spoke of the wonderful thing that had happened. They

knew what it meant. The Lord had heard their prayers and had sent them a deliverer, and that man was none other than their own Gideon.

Gideon felt humble and unequal to the task before him. He knew that it would mean that he and his followers must tear down the idols and build altars to the God of Israel. He knew how angry some of the people would be and how long a time must pass before all the Israelites would be worshiping their God. Yet the work had been given to him to do and he must not fail. Turning to his men he said, "Come, let us build an altar in this place and call it 'The Lord is Friendly,' for he has honoured us this day." So the men gathered stones and built the altar while the women sang. "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon! The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

And in each heart was a song of thanksgiving that the Deliverer had come and men could go forth to battle led by the "sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Gideon, *a stalwart young man.*
Joash, *his father, an old man.*
Phurah, Amos, Joel } *friends and neighbors of Gideon.*
Three women.
An angel, *a young woman.*
Chorus of girls.

COSTUMES:

Men. One-piece straight garment of burlap or of

any dark material, tied around the waist by piece of rope. Men may be barefooted and bareheaded or may wear a simple covering for the head. A skin may be added to Gideon's costume to distinguish him from the others.

Women. Loose, flowing robes of bright colors, veils on heads, falling over shoulders.

Angel. Long, white robe. If desired wings may be made of white metal cloth fastened over wire of desired shape. They are not necessary however. Hair should be light, preferably golden, long and flowing. Gilt scepter in hand.

PROPERTIES:

Wheat for field.
Rock. (May be made of wood; painted or covered with dark paper.)
Tree. (If convenient.)
Basket and dish for offering.
Scepter for angel.
Flashlight for fire.
Red tissue paper for flashlight.

PLACE:

A wheat field with a large tree at one side. If play is given out of doors the wheat may be scattered over the ground near a convenient tree. As the men are threshing the wheat it does not need to be standing. If the play is given indoors the tree may be dispensed with. The wheat can be scattered over the floor to produce the effect of a field.

SCENE: *Gideon and his companions are threshing wheat. The women are seated in the shade of*

the tree singing softly. (A harvest song is most appropriate.)

Joash. [*As song ends.*] This wheat field is not much like the ones wherein I threshed in my father's day.

Amos. This is hardly large enough to be called a field.

Joel. We should not have had even this much if the Midianites had chanced to see it growing. Wherever they have seen wheat growing they have destroyed it even to the last stalk.

Gideon. [*Straightening up and looking at the wheat.*] The Lord hath watched over us and kept us from the hand of the enemy.

Joel. Why should we be blessed when so many of our number are without food? Think of the many who were forced to leave their homes and seek shelter in the caves in the mountains.

Joash. Aye, we do think of them. Israel hath been sore afflicted. The Midianites have come upon us in great numbers. They have taken away our means of living and forced us to leave our homes. Many of our number have died of hardship and starvation.

Joel. For seven years we have been oppressed. Shall we ever be free from our enemies?

Gideon. When our people are willing to give up their idols and return to the true God then shall they prosper.

Amos. The heathen god Baal has been set up and publicly worshiped for so long that our people have completely forgotten their God.

Gideon. Not all of his children have forsaken him

and followed Baal. Many there are who still worship the true God though they do not dare to tell it.

Phurah. [*Places hand on Gideon's shoulder.*] Ah, if all our men were like thee, a man of great valour!

Gideon. I but try to serve the Lord as my father taught me. I cannot understand how the children of Israel can forget the past with all its blessings. The Lord was good to his people. Did he not give them victories over their enemies? Did he not establish peace in the land? Israel hath forgotten his protecting care and followed the shameful ways of the Midianites, even to worshiping idols.

Amos. Surely Israel hath suffered enough.

Gideon. She cannot free herself from the power of the heathen. Some day a great deliverer shall arise and lead my people back to God.

Phurah. Where can be found a greater man than thou? A man of great valour, a son of Joash, a man known for his bravery.

Gideon. Nay, nay. Thou speakest foolishly. I am but a humble man, not fitted for any great task. If the deliverer comes in my day I am ready to fight by his side.

Joash. Thou art brave and noble, my son. It may be that some day thou shalt be able to help Israel.

Gideon. I am always ready to serve my nation. My work now is to thresh this wheat that we may have food.

[*Gideon begins to work again. The other men follow his example. The women, back in the shade, begin to sing softly. It may be the same song as before. Suddenly a bright light floods the place and an angel appears under*

the tree at the side opposite to the women. Men prostrate themselves, women huddle together in terror.

Angel. Gideon, Gideon, arise! Fear not for the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valour!

Gideon. [*Rising.*] If the Lord be with us why then has all this evil befallen us? Where are the miracles of which our fathers told, saying, "Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" Now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.

Angel. Thou art wrong, Gideon. Go in thy might and thou shalt save Israel from the Midianites.

Gideon. Nay, I am not the one.

Angel. Have not I sent thee?

Gideon. How shall I save Israel? My people are weak, my family is poor and I am the least in my father's house.

Angel. Thus sayeth the Lord unto thee, "Surely I will be with thee and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man."

Gideon. [*After a pause.*] Give me a sign that I may know that what thou sayest is true. Go not away until I shall return with a present to set before thee.

Angel. I will tarry until thou come again.

[*Exit Gideon.*

[*Chorus, off-stage, No. 4, in "A First Book in Hymns and Worship," Edith L. Thomas. Any appropriate song may be substituted.*

[*Enter Gideon with a basket and a dish which he places before the angel.*

Gideon. Behold my offering. In the basket is the flesh of a goat and in the dish is unleavened bread.

Angel. Take a part of thy gift and spread it upon this rock.

[*Gideon places pieces of bread on rock near an electric light bulb or flashlight which has previously been placed there and which is concealed from view of audience.*

Gideon. It is done.

Angel. If thy gift is acceptable fire will appear as I touch it.

[*Angel bends over and turns on light. This may be a red bulb or a strong flashlight covered with red paper. In either case the effect will be a red light which will represent fire.*

Gideon. [*Falls on knees with face to the ground.*] Alas, alas, I shall surely die.

Angel. Fear not, thou shalt not die, the Lord hath need of thee. Thou must destroy the altars of Baal and build an altar unto the Lord thy God. Peace be unto thee.

[*Exit angel.*

Gideon. [*Lifts head, rises from ground.*] Who am I that I should destroy the altars of Baal and build an altar unto the Lord?

Phurah. Thou art Gideon and into thy hands hath the Lord delivered the Midianites.

Women. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!

Phurah. Fear not, for we will help thee and many others will come to thy help against the enemy.

Women. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!

Gideon. Let us first erect an altar on this spot and name it, "The Lord is Friendly." We must make it of stones that it may stand forever as a reminder to all people that the Lord doth not forget his children. Help me search for large stones. [*Exeunt men.*

Women. [*Coming to center of stage but looking in the direction in which Gideon has gone.*] The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. Israel shall be freed from the Midianites. The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!

CURTAIN

VI: A DISCONTENTED PEOPLE

OR

Israel Demands a King

Story

Many, many years ago Samuel, the chief judge and leader of the Israelites, sat in his tent at Ramah waiting to hold court. This was in the days before Israel had kings, when they were ruled and guided by prophets who were supposed to tell them what their God wished them to do.

For many years Samuel had been their leader. At first he had been very popular and the people obeyed him, but as he grew older he gave much of his work into the hands of his two sons. Now these two men were not good and thoughtful like their father. They were more interested in getting wealth for themselves than justice for the Israelites. So when their aged father Samuel sent them into distant parts of the land to hold court for him they helped only the people who would pay them the most money. They did not try to find out who was right or who was wrong. They only thought of how much they could make for themselves.

Of course the people did not like that kind of treatment. They grumbled among themselves and everybody said, "Some one ought to tell Samuel how dishonest and wicked his sons are." But no one liked to tell the good old man that his sons were bad.

The Israelites suffered in other ways, too. Near by lived the heathen Philistine tribes. Again and again they had come over and fought the Israelites, stolen their property and destroyed their homes. The Israelites never knew when they were safe. They saw that all these foreign tribes had a king at their head who led them into battle and often to victory so the Israelites began to wish for a king. They thought that if they had a powerful man to command their army that the Philistines would not be able to conquer them. At last, weary of being beaten by their enemies and angry at being taxed and unjustly treated by Samuel's sons, they decided to ask for a king. A few of their number went to Ramah where the aged Samuel held court. He welcomed them and asked what he might do for them.

One of the men replied, "We have come to lay a serious matter before thee. It is a question of right and justice."

Then he told Samuel how his sons were neglecting their duties and how they not only refused to help the people, but actually made their lives a burden by heavy taxes and by taking bribes from the men who had money, but giving no help to the poor who could not pay.

Samuel was greatly distressed when he heard the news. He had supposed that his sons were obeying his orders and doing all they could for Israel. But his surprise was much greater when the men said: "Give us a king to rule over us that we may be like other nations; give us a king to judge us, to fight for us, and to make us a powerful nation."

Samuel could hardly believe that he had heard aright. It seemed to him almost wicked for the people

to even wish for a king. They had always been governed by prophets or judges. Why should they ask for a king? To their demand he answered:

"There has never been a king over the children of Israel. It is not the custom."

The men were not to be put off with any such excuse. Again and again they cried, "Give us a king, give us a king."

In vain Samuel tried to tell them that a king would not help them. He would increase the taxes of which they had complained. He spoke of the money that would be needed to build a palace for the king and to provide him with chariots, soldiers and servants. He said:

"He will take your sons for chariot-drivers and for horsemen, for his army and for his harvest fields. He will take your daughters to be cooks and your servants for his house. He will take your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves, your sheep and your cattle and ye shall all become poor."

But the men only cried the louder, "Give us a king."

Once again the aged prophet tried to tell the men that if he allowed them to have a king the day would come when they would be sorry and ask to have him removed but it would be too late then. He begged them to give up the idea but the men had but one answer, "Give us a king."

When Samuel saw that the men were determined to have a king anyway he finally yielded and said that he would allow them to have a king if they would accept the man whom he should appoint. That they agreed to do. Then the men left the prophet to think over the matter and to call them together when he had made his choice.

After the men had left, Samuel sat alone thinking of their demands and wondering where he could find a suitable man for king. He was still trying to find an answer when a servant entered and said, "My lord, there is a man yonder who would speak with thee."

Samuel thought it must be one of the men who had just left but the servant said, "He is a stranger."

Samuel answered, "Bid him enter."

It was a young man who came, very tall and handsome. He had a stick in his hand, a knife at his belt and a goat-skin of water hanging from his shoulder. He looked as though he had come from a distance. He knelt before Samuel, held out to him a piece of silver and said, "Pray accept this gift. It is not large but it is all I have."

Samuel asked, "Who art thou?"

"I am Saul, the son of Kish," the young man replied.

Then he told Samuel that some days before his father had lost a drove of mules. He had sent Saul and a servant to find them. They had gone northward, asking every camel-driver or shepherd they met for news of the mules. They had climbed very high hills and gone down into the valleys to every flock they had seen feeding, but nowhere had they found any trace of the mules. When they had come near to Ramah the servant had suggested that they go and ask the prophet where the mules might be found.

Saul had nothing to give to the prophet for a present, as was the custom when asking help, but the servant had taken a small silver coin from his girdle and offered it to Saul. So they had come to Samuel and Saul asked:

"Wilt thou accept so small a gift and tell me where the animals are?"

Samuel answered, "Thy father sent other men to search for them too, and they have been found before now." Then he added, "Thou shalt stay and eat with me and rest until to-morrow," for Samuel had been busy thinking all the time Saul was talking. Now as Samuel looked in admiration upon the young man he said, "There is not a goodlier person among the children of Israel. Thou art fitted to do more than tend sheep. Perhaps thou couldst rule a nation."

Saul answered, "Am not I a Benjaminite of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? Is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why dost thou speak so to me?"

Long into the night Samuel talked with Saul. He told him what he believed was God's plan for Israel. He told him of the demand of the people for a king to lead them into battle. He told Saul what kind of man the king should be and of all he must do for his people. Then he left Saul alone to think of his words.

In the morning before Saul left him Samuel bade him kneel down and taking a horn of oil from his tunic poured it upon Saul's head saying, "In the name of the Lord I anoint thee to be king over Israel." Then he told Saul to go on his way, but to be ready to come to him again whenever he should send him word.

Samuel immediately sent word to the Israelites that some one from every tribe must meet him at Mizpah. Curious and excited, the men gathered early on the appointed day. At last Samuel came solemnly into their midst. He saw by their faces that they still wished for a king. Briefly he told how the men had

come to him asking for a king, how he had tried to show them the folly of their request, how, when they would not listen, he had finally consented to their demands.

How the people shouted, "Long live Samuel, who giveth us a king!"

But Samuel was not cheered by their cry. He told them that they were rejecting their God. He also told them that from the days of his childhood when he had waited on the priest in the temple he had tried to do right and serve them faithfully. He said, "If any man has suffered at my hands or if I have oppressed or cheated any one, or taken any man's cattle or received a bribe from any one, let that man speak now and I will make the matter right."

All the people exclaimed, "Nay, nay. Thou hast never oppressed us or taken any man's property. We have no fault to find with thee." For the people knew Samuel was a good man and they loved him. If he had been strong enough to lead them in battle perhaps they would not have asked for a king, but now he was old and they needed a younger man for a leader. When they had assured Samuel of their love and loyalty, he said:

"Now present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes."

When all the tribes had come near they cast lots and the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When the tribe of Benjamin stood before Samuel by families, the family of Matri was taken and Saul, the son of Kish, was taken from that family.

When they looked for Saul they could not find him anywhere. While the lots were being taken it suddenly came to Saul what a tremendous responsibility

it was to be a king. It seemed to him he was not fitted to rule over the people; that he could not possibly stand before them and be called king. Quickly he slipped away and hid. After a while some of the men found him hiding in the stuff and dragged him before Samuel.

When he stood before the people they saw that he was the tallest man present. Samuel seemed to know their thoughts, for he exclaimed:

"See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen, there is none like him among the people."

The people were pleased and shouted, "God save the king." But a few who were jealous refused to join in the shout.

When the shouting ceased Samuel spoke again:

"If ye will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and keep his commandments ye and the king that reigneth over you shall prosper. But if ye do wickedly ye shall suffer. As for me God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you. I will still teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord and serve him."

The people shouted again, only this time they said, "Long live Samuel, the prophet. Long live Saul, king of Israel."

As Samuel saw their joy and heard their words he realized that he would still be their councilor and if Saul would only be guided by him perhaps this change might be a good thing for Israel after all. So it was with a lightened heart that he walked away, taking Saul with him. While the people watched them from sight shouting, "Long live Saul, the first king of Israel."

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Samuel, *an old prophet.*
Saul, *a tall young man.*
Delegates. (Five men.)
Twelve men representing the twelve tribes.
Eight men from the tribe of Benjamin.
Seven men, *sons of Matri.*
Kish, *father of Saul.*
A man of Judah.
A man of Dan.
A man of Gad.
A man of Benjamin.
A man of Matri.
A servant to Samuel.

COSTUMES:

Samuel. A plain cotton tunic of white with a cord for a girdle. Over this a generous purple tunic coming to the ankles. The head-dress may be white or black. Hair and long beard of white. A staff should be carried in his hand.

Saul. An undergarment of brown burlap reaching a little below the knees. A bright girdle of red or yellow. A sleeveless coat of some brilliant color cut rather straight and hanging loosely. No mantle. A bright-colored scarf wrapped closely about the head.

Other men. Long loose undergarments of pale or striped material. Girdles of any brilliant color wrapped about the waist. A striped blanket or couch cover may serve for the outer garment. The ends of the blanket should be folded back

until they are about ten inches apart, the edges sewed and the garment allowed to hang from shoulders. A large handkerchief or square of thin material will serve for head-dress. This has the corner turned under at the front and is worn loosely flowing from the forehead and kept in place by a twist or two of rope.

PROPERTIES:

Chair or couch for Samuel.
Table for Samuel.
A piece of silver for Saul.
An elevated platform or pedestal for Act II.
Slip of paper or pieces of straw for lots.

PLACES:

Act I. Samuel's Home at Ramah.
Act II. A Street or Open Lot.

ACT I

PLACE: *Samuel's court at Ramah. (If the play is given out of doors, place a large seat or couch at the back toward the right. A small table may be placed near it. If the play is given indoors a plain back-drop of green or blue is all that is needed to create the impression of out-of-doors. Place the couch in front of the drop and near to it.) Samuel is seated on the couch. Servant enters and announces delegates.*

Servant. Five men to see thee, Seer.
Samuel. Bid them enter.
Servant. [*Returning to entrance.*] Enter.
[*Delegates enter.*

Samuel. Peace be unto you.

Delegate. Peace be unto thee.

Samuel. Come near and tell me your mission.

First Delegate. [*Approaching Samuel.*] We have come to lay before thee a serious matter. It is a question of right and justice.

Samuel. This, my court, is the place to which such matters should be brought. Did I not establish these courts throughout the land in order that all men might be able to receive justice?

First Delegate. Aye, sir. Thou didst appoint a court in every city district. There thou didst go twice a year and men brought their troubles unto thee.

Second Delegate. [*Advancing.*] Then all was well.

Samuel. [*In surprise.*] Is not all well now?

Second Delegate. Nay. It is of this we would speak. There is no justice in the land now.

Samuel. What is this thou sayest? When I became too old and infirm to take the journeys to the distant courts did I not send my sons to hold court in my place? Joel I sent to Bethel and Abiah I sent to Beersheba.

Second Delegate. Aye, but thy sons serve not the people of Israel as thou didst.

First Delegate. Thy sons walk not in thy way. Men have not received justice.

Samuel. Men have not received justice? What meanest thou? Have not my sons attended court as I commanded them?

First Delegate. They have attended court but they have done so for their own advantage, not for ours.

Fourth Delegate. Thy sons love riches and power.

They have fallen into extravagance. They have taken bribes that they might have more money.

Fifth Delegate. Our taxes have they increased and our lives have they made a burden. There is now no justice in the land.

Samuel. Your words distress me. How can these things be?

First Delegate. When thou wert well and strong thou didst lead Israel aright, but now there is no one to guide us. Hear then our request, O sire. Make us a king to rule over us that we may be like other nations; give us a king to judge us, to fight for us and to make us a powerful nation.

Samuel. Ye know not what ye say.

Delegates. A king, a king. Give us a king!

Samuel. Nay, nay. It is impossible. There has never been a king in Israel. Ye are not like other nations. Ye are the Lord's chosen people. He rules Israel through His prophets and judges.

Second Delegate. But since thou art no longer able to bear the burden of leadership Israel is left without a head. A king would work with thee to make Israel a strong nation.

Delegates. Give us a king!

Samuel. A king would not help Israel.

Third Delegate. Why should we not have a king as other nations do?

Samuel. It is not the custom. There has never been a king placed over the children of Israel.

Fourth Delegate. Can not the custom be changed? Israel needs a king.

Samuel. That I should live to see this day!

Delegates. Give us a king to rule over us.

Samuel. [*Rising.*] Hearken unto me. Ye speak

of your taxes being heavy now. If ye have a king your taxes will be increased. It will take large sums of money to maintain the government, to build a palace for the king, to provide chariots, soldiers and servants for him. Not only your money will be taken but ye and your families will have to serve the king. [*Delegates show uneasiness.*] He will take your sons for chariot-drivers and for horsemen and to run before his car. Others he will take for the army and yet others to reap the harvest. He will take your daughters to be cooks and bakers. He will take your menservants and your maidservants and ye will be left poor. [*Delegates show signs of impatience but do not speak.*] He will take your fields, your vineyards and your olive groves, even the best of them and give them to his favorites. He will take a tenth of your sheep and your cattle and ye shall be helpless to stop him. Would ye be willing to pay so great a price for a king?

Delegates. Aye, aye. Give us a king.

Samuel. [*Angrily.*] If I grant your request the day will come when ye will repent asking for a king and will cry to the Lord for deliverance. But on that day the Lord will not listen to your prayers but will permit you to suffer the results of this foolish choice.

[*Delegates laugh and scoff.*

Second Delegate. Thou art seeing evils which may not come. Thinkest thou that if we had a king he could do as he pleased? Wouldst thou not be near to help and advise him?

Third Delegate. Could not a king as well as a judge know the will of God?

Delegates. A king, a king! Israel demands a king!

Samuel. Ye are a foolish and headstrong people.

If ye will not listen to my warning I will grant you the right to have a king. But in the days of sorrow that will surely come ye will recall my words and repent of your obstinacy.

Delegates. A king, a king! Grant us a king.

Samuel. Be it so. Ye shall have a king but he must be a man whom I shall choose.

Delegates. Aye, aye, only give us a king.

Samuel. It shall be as I have said. Now leave me.

Delegates. Long live the king of Israel!

[*Exeunt delegates, talking excitedly.*

Samuel. That I should live to see this day! Israel hath forsaken Jehovah. [*Drops into chair, shakes his head, assumes an attitude of depression.*]

[*After a moment voices are heard outside.*

Saul. Is Samuel, the prophet, here?

Servant. He is, but I think he doth not wish to be disturbed.

Saul. I shall not detain him long, but I must see him at once.

Servant. Wait here. I will inquire.

[*Enter servant.*

Servant. My lord, there is a man yonder who would speak with thee?

Samuel. [*Raises his head wearily.*] Is he one of the men who has just left me?

Servant. Nay, he is a stranger.

Samuel. Bid him enter. I must not refuse any one.

[*Exit servant.*

Servant. [*To Saul.*] My lord will see thee.

[*Saul enters, approaches Samuel and kneels before him.*

Samuel. Peace be unto thee.

Saul. And to thee.

Samuel. What is it thou desirest of me?

Saul. [*Extending hand holding piece of silver.*] Pray accept this gift of silver. It is not large, but it is all I have with me.

Samuel. Who art thou?

Saul. I am Saul, the son of Kish of the tribe of Benjamin.

Samuel. Rise, stand upon thy feet and make known the cause of thy distress, for I can see that thou art troubled.

Saul. [*Rising.*] Thou hast spoken truly, my lord.

Samuel. How tall thou art! A king among men. [*Aside.*] A kingly man.

Saul. My father hath lost his mules. I and one of the servants have searched everywhere but cannot find them. Now it is said that thou knowest things that are hidden from other men and whatsoever thou sayest will surely come to pass. Our bread is all gone and we have only this silver to offer thee. Wilt thou accept so small a gift and in exchange tell me where are the animals that were lost three days ago?

Samuel. Cease thy worryings. Thy father hath sent other men to search and by this time the animals are again in his possession. Thou and thy gift are both acceptable to me. Thou shalt tarry and eat with me this day and to-morrow I will let thee go.

Saul. The prophet showeth great honor to his servant.

Samuel. There is much in my heart I would tell thee. Thou art a choice young man. There is not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than thou. Thou art fitted to do more than tend sheep. Who knoweth but thou couldst rule a nation?

Saul. Am not I a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? Is not my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Wherefore, then speakest thou so to me?

Samuel. Come thou with me to the housetop and I will tell thee what is in my mind. Little dost thou dream of the task that is before thee. It was not chance that sent thee to me this day. Surely it was the hand of the Lord. Come and I will show thee how thou canst serve Israel.

[*Exeunt Samuel and Saul.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

PLACE: *Mizpah.*

If the play is given out of doors another location than that of Act I should be used. If indoors branches may be fastened to a back-drop of green to suggest an outdoor scene or the plain back-drop may be used as in Act I. A rude platform should be at the center.

A group of Israelites stand talking together. Others continue to enter in groups of three and four. Greetings are exchanged and the men stand about in small groups or pass from one place to another.

First Delegate. Samuel hath ordered all the tribes to meet him here at Mizpah.

Second Delegate. Yea, he sent word that some one from every tribe must be here; that if any tribe failed to be represented nothing could be done to-day.

Third Delegate. What do you think he means to do?

Fourth Delegate. He must give us a king. We have his word.

Fifth Delegate. Yea, we shall have our king.

First Delegate. Samuel was not pleased at our request.

Second Delegate. He is an old man and it is not easy for him to change his ways.

Third Delegate. He can't believe the evil reports of his sons.

Fourth Delegate. He fears a king would not listen to his advice.

Fifth Delegate. He is afraid that Israel may adopt the customs of heathen nations.

First Delegate. It does not follow that because Israel hath a king she must forsake Jehovah. With a king Israel will be stronger and better able to protect herself. [*Enter Benjaminites with Saul.*

Second Delegate. Here come the Benjaminites.

All. Greetings. Greetings.

Third Delegate. Now we are all here.

Fourth Delegate. The next time we meet we shall have a king in our midst.

All. A king, a king in Israel!

[*Enter Samuel. The Israelites become silent. Samuel advances to center and mounts a rough platform which has been erected. For a moment he stands looking at the group before him, then begins to speak slowly.*

Samuel. Ye sent unto me certain of your number saying: "Set a king over us." Now listen to my words. The Lord God of Israel brought you up out of Egypt

and saved you from the nations that oppressed you. Ye have this day rejected your God.

All. Nay, nay. We still serve Jehovah.

Samuel. [*Raising hand for silence.*] Ye have said, "Set a king over us." I have hearkened unto your cry and will grant your request.

All. Long live Samuel, who giveth us a king!

Samuel. I have walked before you from my childhood. Now I am old and grayheaded. All these years I have tried to serve you faithfully. If any man has suffered at my hands I call upon him to speak now and say if I have ever oppressed him or defrauded him, or taken his cattle or received a bribe and I will restore his property to him.

All. Nay, nay. Thou hast never defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken any man's property.

Samuel. The Lord is witness of your words.

All. He is witness.

First Delegate. We have no fault to find with thee. Thou hast served this people well but now thou art old and thy sons walk not in thy way, so we have asked for a king to rule over us.

Samuel. Your request is granted. Now present yourselves before me, one man from each tribe. [*Twelve men take places in line before Samuel.*] Ye shall draw lots to see from which tribe your king shall come. The tribe of the man who draws the shortest slip shall be taken. [*Men draw and compare lots.*

Man of Judah. Mine is the longest.

Man of Gad. Mine is long, too.

Man of Dan. Mine is short.

Man of Benjamin. [*Who has been examining all the slips.*] Mine is the shortest!

All. [*Look eagerly.*] It is. Benjamin has the shortest!

Samuel. [*Examines slips. Raises hand for silence.*] The tribe of Benjamin is taken.

[*Great excitement among the men of Benjamin. Others look on with envy. During the drawing of the lots, Saul, unnoticed, has disappeared from view.*

A Man of Judah. [*Disapprovingly.*] Benjamin is the smallest of the tribes, why should it be taken?

Samuel. Ye must abide by the lot. Let one man from each of the families of the tribe of Benjamin come forward. [*Eight men present themselves.*] Again the shortest shall determine the choice.

[*Men draw and confer.*

A Man of Benjamin. The family of Matri is taken.

Samuel. The family of Matri is taken. [*The others, showing disappointment and envy, grumblingly return to their places.*] Let the sons of Matri come forward.

[*The sons of Matri come forward. Lots are drawn and examined by Samuel.*

Men. Kish hath it!

Samuel. The family of Kish is taken.

Kish. My lord, there is no need to choose further. There is but one of my sons who is able to be king. The lot must surely fall upon Saul.

Samuel. Thou hast spoken truly. Thy son Saul is the one. Bring him to me. [*Kish returns to men.*

Kish. Where is Saul?

Men. Saul is not here.

Kish. He was with us a moment ago. Where is he now? [*Looks among the men.*]

First Delegate. He hath hidden himself among the stuff. I saw him steal away.

Samuel. Search and fetch him.

[*Exeunt men of Matri.*

A Man of Judah. What kind of a king will he make if he is not interested enough to wait for the announcement? [*Enter men, dragging Saul.*

Men. Here he is. We found him hiding in the stuff.

Second Delegate. When we told him he was to be king he refused to come with us.

A Man of Judah. A fine king he will make!

A Man of Matri. There are better men in our tribe. Men who are not afraid.

Samuel. Better it is to be of a humble spirit. Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. [*Samuel leads Saul to a place beside him. Puts his hand on Saul's shoulder.*] See ye him whom the Lord hath chosen. There is none like him among all the people.

All. Hail to the king of Israel!

Samuel. If ye will fear the Lord and serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against his commandment then shall both ye and the king that reigneth over you prosper. But if ye do wickedly ye shall suffer, both ye and the king. I have granted your request. Behold the king whom ye have desired.

All. Long live the king!

Samuel. As for me, God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord and serve him in truth with all your heart.

All. Long live Samuel, the prophet!

All. Long live Saul, king of Israel!

Samuel. [*To Saul.*] Come thou with me. There is much I would say to thee.

[*Exeunt Samuel and Saul. People watch them from sight.*

First Delegate. The first king of Israel!

All. Long live Saul, the first king of Israel!

CURTAIN

VII: A SHEPHERD BOY HONORED

OR

David Anointed King

Story

On an autumn day, long, long ago the aged prophet Samuel sat deep in thought. Some years before he had anointed Saul king over Israel. At first Saul had seemed in every way fitted to be a king. He had listened to Samuel's words of advice and had tried to do what seemed the best thing for Israel. But after a while Saul came to enjoy his power and being called king and he objected to having a prophet or any one else tell him what to do. So instead of trying to make Israel a strong and righteous nation he thought of his own glory and did the things which he pleased. As Samuel thought of Saul's selfishness and wilfulness he realized that Israel would suffer if all her kings should act as Saul did, so he tried to think of some one who would make the kind of king Israel needed.

Then it seemed to Samuel that God told him what to do. He was to fill a horn with specially prepared sweet-scented oil and go to the village of Bethlehem and anoint one of the sons of Jesse, a rich man of the place, to be king. Samuel feared that if Saul suspected his errand he would prevent his going. So early one morning, with the vial of oil hidden in his tunic, Samuel left home, taking with him a servant who drove a

cow along before him. Any one who might see them would naturally think that Samuel was going up into the hills to sacrifice, as he often did.

From the walls of the town of Bethlehem the watchmen saw Samuel riding slowly up the hills toward their town. Quickly they sent word to the elders, for Samuel was a great prophet and had long told the people what they must do. The people feared him even more than King Saul.

The elders hastened out to meet the prophet and asked, "Comest thou peaceably?" Samuel answered, "Peaceably; I am come to sacrifice unto Jehovah. Hasten, make yourselves ready and join me."

When they had reached a place where there was an altar Samuel lighted the incense and placed his offering on the altar. The elders made ready to sing hymns, and the women, who had followed the men, stood at a distance watching for they were not allowed to share in the sacrifice with the men. Later there would be a feast at which the women would be allowed to serve the men.

Samuel looked at the elders and said, "I have invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice." Even as he spoke the men were seen approaching. They made a splendid group, for Jesse was a good man, rich in flocks and herds, and his sons were tall and strong and brave. They were all greatly pleased to be invited by Samuel to the sacrifice and their joy showed in their faces.

Samuel called Jesse to him and said, "Jehovah hath chosen one of thy sons to be king over Israel. Cause them to pass before me that I may tell thee which one." So Jesse called his sons forward by their names and bade them pass before Samuel. First came Eliab, in

striped cloak and gray tunic, sure that because he was the eldest and the tallest that he would be chosen.

When Samuel saw his height and his fine face, he said, "Surely Jehovah's choice is before me." But Jehovah sent word unto Samuel saying, "Look not on his countenance or on his height because I have rejected him: for Jehovah seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but Jehovah looketh on the heart." And Samuel told Jesse that Eliab was not chosen.

Then Jesse called Abinadab, his second son, who walked proudly up to the prophet, confident that, as the eldest had been rejected, he would be chosen. He had always thought he was better than Eliab and had been rather jealous of the favors which came to his brother because he was the eldest. But Samuel said, "Neither hath Jehovah chosen this one."

Jesse called his third son, Shammah, who walked up to the prophet with head erect and spear in hand for he was the warrior of the family. Even Jesse thought that Shammah must be the one chosen, for he believed he would be able to lead Israel to victory in battle. So he was amazed and disappointed when the prophet said, "Neither hath Jehovah chosen him."

The elders and the women anxiously watched as all Jesse's sons went slowly past the prophet. Then Samuel turned to Jesse and said, "Jehovah hath not chosen these. Are all thy children here?" Jesse answered, "There remaineth yet the youngest who is watching the sheep." Neither Jesse or his sons thought there was any chance that David, the youngest son, could ever be king. He was too young even to be a soldier. He was called a dreamer by his brothers, for he seemed content to stay in the pastures with staff and dog and

sling, playing upon his flute and watching from afar the fire and smoke of the villages as he kept his father's flocks together. The brothers were sure that it was useless to send for David, but Samuel said, "Send and fetch him, for we will not sit down to the feast until he comes." So a man was sent for him.

All the brothers, except the youngest, was annoyed at the delay and amazed that David should even be considered after they had been rejected. The youngest son was very fond of his shepherd brother and proudly he told the prophet how brave and strong David was and how at one time he had killed a bear that came into the flock and on another day a lion that had stolen a lamb.

Soon David appeared breathless from running, for the messenger had told him only that he must hasten at once to his father. David feared that injury had come to his father or to one of his brothers. He scarcely looked at the people but ran to his father crying, "Oh, my father, hath any evil befallen thee or my brothers?"

As Samuel looked at him he saw a young man, not tall, but strong and brown, with light hair, ruddy cheeks and bright eyes. He thought him good to look upon as he stood there dressed in his shepherd garb with its leather girdle from which hung his club, sling and knife.

Jesse called David's attention to the visitor in their midst. As David looked it seemed to him that he must have seen Samuel somewhere before, for he knew he was a prophet. Reverently David bowed before him. The prophet asked David many questions about himself. As they talked together the voice of Jehovah

came unto Samuel saying, "Arise, anoint him: for this is he." At Samuel's command David knelt before him. Samuel raised his hand and much to the astonishment of his brothers poured the fragrant oil upon David's head saying, "Jehovah hath chosen thee to be king in Israel."

How David's youngest brother shouted as he heard the news! The other brothers, too disappointed and surprised to join in the rejoicing and excitement that followed, stole quietly away. Jesse would have made a holiday for David and had him stay and feast with the others, but David wished to return to his flock. So with a look of pride from his father and a blessing from the prophet, David left them and went back to his sheep where, with only them and the friendly stars for company, he could think of the wonderful thing that had happened and all he must learn before he should be ready to stand before the world as "David, King of Israel."

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Samuel, *an aged prophet.*
Elders.
Jesse, *a man of Bethlehem.*
Eliab, *eldest son of Jesse*
Abinadab, *a tall young man*
Shammah, *a warrior*
David, *a shepherd, youngest son* } *sons of Jesse.*
Abiah, *next to David*
Three others
Women.

COSTUMES:

Samuel. Dark robe and head-dress. Mantle of purple hanging from shoulders. Staff in hand.

Elders. Black robes. Mantles may be similar to Samuel's, but smaller.

Jesse. Plain undergarment with striped or colored mantle. Colored head-dress. Beard. Sandals.

Sons (except David). Similar to father but without beard or sandals. Men should be barefooted. Abiah should be without mantle and wear a close-fitting cap rather than flowing head-dress.

David. One-piece garment of burlap, natural color. (See description under "Spies" in "How Joshua Became a Leader.") A skin of some animal hung from one shoulder. A staff or crook in hand. A leather girdle from which hangs his club, sling and knife.

PROPERTIES:

Altar, a rough pile of wood and rocks.
Incense dish and incense.
Staff for Samuel.
Sling, knife and club for David.
Staff for David.

PLACE:

It is a decided advantage to give this story out of doors. A suitable setting on a hill is ideal. A rock may be used for the altar, David can be heard hurrying through the bushes before he is seen. He enters from a different spot than that by which Jesse and his sons come in. At the close Samuel and Jesse can be seen as they walk on together until hidden by the trees. This is a good

story to use at the out-of-door period of the daily vacation Bible School.

If given indoors little or no scenery need be used according to the purpose of the dramatization. If desired the boys may bring in branches and plants and so give the suggestion of the out of doors or the stage may be left bare and the imagination allowed to furnish it.

SCENE: *An open space on a hill-top. On it is a rude altar from which smoke is arising. (Incense in dishes will furnish smoke with no danger of fire.) At the right of the altar stands the aged prophet Samuel. At left a group of elders.*

First Elder. Why hast thou come here?

Samuel. I come to sacrifice unto Jehovah.

Second Elder. Is thy errand one of peace?

Samuel. I come peaceably. My errand is with Jesse the Bethlehemite. Him and his sons have I bidden come to the sacrifice.

Third Elder. They are approaching now.

[*Enter Jesse and seven sons.*

Jesse. We are come at thy command.

Samuel. It is at the command of Jehovah that ye are here.

Jesse. [*Anxiously.*] The command of Jehovah? What doth he require of his servant?

Samuel. Great blessing and honor are come to thy house this day, for the Lord hath chosen one of thy sons to be the future king of Israel.

Sons. [*Excitedly.*] King of Israel?

Samuel. Yea, Jehovah hath rejected Saul from

reigning over Israel. A few years longer will he be king but his days will be full of trouble and none of his sons shall sit on the throne. The Lord will put a new king over Israel and that king [*to Jesse*] is to be one of thy sons.

Eliab. I am the eldest. It must be that I am the one chosen.

Abinadab. Just because thou art the eldest is no reason why thou shouldst be king.

Shammah. I am more skillful at fighting than either of you.

Abinadab. A king has to do more than fight.

Other Brothers. What about us?

Jesse. My sons, quarrel not. The Lord will reveal his will unto his servant Samuel.

Samuel. Eliab, step forward. It seemeth to me that thou must be the choice of the Lord. Thou art tall and kingly in appearance and thy countenance is favorable.

Voice of Angel. [*Off-stage. If desired the angel may appear at Samuel's side.*] Hear the word of the Lord: Look not on his countenance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. Eliab hath he rejected. [*Eliab steps back.*

Jesse. Thou, Abinadab, must be the chosen one.

Samuel. Abinadab, step forward.

[*Abinadab, sure of success, steps proudly forward.*

Abinadab. I have always told Eliab that he was vain, now he will believe me. I may not be quite as tall as he but I shall make as good a king.

Angel. A king needeth to be humble as well as

wise. Thou art over-confident and sure of thyself. Thou art rejected by the Lord.

Abinadab. [*Disgustedly.*] Well, who can it be, then?

Samuel. There are yet five other sons of Jesse.

Jesse. Shammah is next.

[*Shammah steps forward.*

Samuel. He is the warrior. Perhaps he is the Lord's choice.

Angel. The Lord desireth peace more than war. His king must love fighting not for its own sake but only as a protection for his people. Shammah is rejected.

Jesse. The favor of the Lord is not with us, lest would he have chosen one of my three eldest. None of the others can compare with them.

Youngest. There yet remaineth four of thy sons, O my father. Why shouldst thou despise our youth? Did not the prophet say that Saul hath yet more years to reign? When the time cometh for the new king we shall be men grown.

Samuel. The Lord knoweth his own will. Cause thy sons to pass before me that I may see them all for the Lord said, "I will send thee to Jesse, the Bethlehemite, for I have found me a king among his sons. I will show thee what thou shalt do and thou shalt anoint him whom I name unto thee."

Jesse. [*To four.*] Do as the prophet asketh. Pass in line before him.

[*Four men pass slowly by. Each pauses and looks inquiringly at the prophet as he passes.*

Samuel. The voice is silent. I know not what to do.

First Elder. Why not have all Jesse's sons stand

before thee at the same time. It may be that the Lord will reveal his will by some sign.

Samuel. It shall be done as thou sayeth. [*To sons.*] Stand in a line before me in order, from the oldest unto the youngest, while I beseech the Lord to show me his choice.

[*Samuel goes to altar, adds to sacrifice. Men form in line. Samuel returns, looks intently at each.*

Samuel. [*Slowly shakes his head.*] The Lord hath not chosen them. [*Pauses. To Jesse.*] Are these all thy children?

Jesse. There remaineth yet the youngest, but he is a mere boy, and he keepeth the sheep.

Samuel. Send and fetch him.

Abinadab. Surely Jehovah would not choose him. He is only a boy.

Eliab. Moreover he never will be a man for he careth not for the things which please a man. He would rather play on a harp and sing songs which he makes up himself. [*Laughter.*] A great king he would be.

Shammah. Why, he has never even seen a battle!

Abiah. He is brave though. He killed a lion that stole a sheep out of the flock.

Shammah. Hush! What doth a prophet care about a lamb?

Abiah. I am not talking about a lamb, but about David. [*To Samuel.*] O my lord, he, my brother, is very strong and brave. He killed a lion and a bear and did it without a weapon. David went after the lion and took the lamb out of his mouth and saved it. When the lion turned on David he caught him by the beard and smote him and killed him.

[*Boy should act out words as he speaks them.*

Jesse. [*To Samuel.*] My lord must overlook the boy's enthusiasm. He is next the youngest, and the boys have ever been close friends.

Samuel. Fetch the lad, for we will not sit down until he comes.

Jesse. [*To one of the younger sons.*] Go, bid one of the servants hasten and bring David.

Eliab. Why wait for him? If none of us were chosen surely this shepherd lad will not be. Let us return home.

Jesse. Ye shall not go until the prophet hath seen your brother David. It may be that ye will yet be needed.

Abinadab. Yea, father is right. There may have been a mistake.

Samuel. His ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts. [*Before altar.*] Let my cry come before thee, O Lord! Give me understanding according unto thy word.

[*Adds incense to sacrifice.*

Samuel. Ye elders of Israel, let your voices rise in supplication to the Lord Most High.

[*Elders chant or repeat Psalm 90 or any appropriate selection.*

Samuel. It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praises unto his name.

[*David enters hurriedly and goes directly to Jesse.*

David. O my father, thy servant said I should come to thee in all haste. Hath harm befallen thee or my brothers? [*Looks at brothers.*

Jesse. [*Lays hand on David's shoulder.*] Nay, nay, lad. Thy brothers are all here. We have a visitor who desireth to see thee.

David. [*Turns, looks intently at Samuel.*] Surely, thou art a prophet. [*Bows before Samuel.*

Samuel. Thou art ruddy and of a beautiful countenance. Wast thou with the sheep?

David. Aye, my lord, my work is to guard the flock. All day and often through the night I am with them.

Samuel. Dost thou not ever tire of thy task?

David. Not yet, I have so many wonderful things to think about.

Samuel. What are they?

David. The heavens, with the sun, the moon, the clouds and the stars. The earth with its trees and flowers, its grass and its brooks. [*In a lower voice.*] Then, too, I have my dreams.

Samuel. Dreams? What are thy dreams?

David. [*Hangs his head.*] They are too wonderful to be told, for I am but a boy, and my dreams are all of the time when I shall be a man.

Samuel. What wouldst thou do when thou art a man?

David. I would be a soldier in the army of the king.

Samuel. [*Disappointedly.*] Ah, dost thou care only to fight?

David. Not so, my lord, but I would help free Israel from her enemies. Why should the Philistines and the other heathen tribes triumph over the Lord's chosen people? Who is like unto our God who dwelleth on high? For the earth is his and all the nations upon it.

Samuel. [*To Jesse.*] Surely the spirit of Jehovah is in him.

Angel. The Lord sayeth, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

Samuel. Thou shalt be more than a soldier in the king's army. Thou shalt be the king of Israel and lead her armies to victory, for Jehovah hath chosen thee this day. Kneel. [*David kneels. Samuel takes oil and anoints David.*] Behold I anoint thee king over Israel. Go back and tend thy father's sheep and prepare thyself for the task which is before thee. May Jehovah bless thee and keep thee and instruct thee.

[*David rises.*

Jesse. [*Clasping David to him.*] David, my son!

Abiah. David, king in Israel! Did I not tell thee that David was brave and good? [*Other brothers steal quietly away.*] Long live David, king of Israel.

Samuel. This is not to be published abroad as yet. David hath much to learn ere he will be ready to rule. King Saul's reign is not finished.

Jesse. [*To David.*] Come thou home with me, my son. Thou dost not need to return to the sheep until morning.

David. Not so, my father. I must be alone. I pray thee, let me return at once to the hills and to my task.

Samuel. Grant the boy's request. It is well.

Jesse. [*To David.*] Go if it pleaseth thee. I will wait for the prophet.

David. I thank thee. [*Exit David.*

Samuel. [*To Elders.*] See that the fire is extinguished. [*To Jesse.*] Come thou with me a way as I travel toward Ramah. [*Exeunt Samuel and Jesse.*

Elders. [*Extinguish the fire, chanting.*] "The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our

refuge. Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation. Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen and amen.

[*Exeunt Elders. The chanting continues until the last man is off-stage, the chant being repeated if necessary. If the boys cannot chant, a hymn may be sung or the words recited by one of the number.*

CURTAIN

VIII: A LIE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

OR

David Fleeing from Saul

Story

In the days of long ago David was a captain in the king's army. He was young, brave and successful, a favorite with all the people, but King Saul was jealous of him and finally decreed that he should be killed.

When David heard the news his one thought was to put himself beyond the reach of the king's men. Without stopping for food, clothing or even to get his sword, he hurried from the place and traveled with all haste until he felt he had escaped his pursuers.

He had not gone far when he began to realize how unfortunate it was that he had no sword. He was without a weapon of any kind and he knew that the men who were seeking him would be well armed. He would need food, too, and for a while he must stay in hiding. If only he had been able to take something with him!

As he made his way over the hills he saw below him the little town of Nob where lived about a hundred priests with their wives and children. Here the ark was kept in its big tent, and Ahimelech, the head priest, offered sacrifices for the people.

Quickly David made his way down into the village and to the tabernacle. Ahimelech was surprised to see David and asked:

"Why art thou here alone and no man with thee?"

David thought, "Now if I tell him the truth, he will refuse to help me because of the king," so he answered:

"The king hath sent me on important business and commanded me to let no one know what it is. I came away in such a hurry that I did not stop to take food for my journey. Give me bread, I pray thee, that I be not hungry."

The priest answered, "I have no bread here but the hallowed bread which has just been taken from the altar. If thy business is urgent I will give thee the bread."

David knew that the bread from the altar was considered sacred and not supposed to be eaten, but he was hungry, and he did not know where else to go for food, so he took it. Then he asked for a sword. Ahimelech said:

"The only one I have here is the sword of Goliath, the Philistine, whom thou slewest. Wilt thou take it?"

David was so anxious for a sword that he would have accepted any. But when he heard that he might take the one that had belonged to Goliath he was delighted. It seemed to him like a sign of good luck for he had been successful before with this same sword so he said, "Give me the sword for there is none like it."

One more request David made, that the priest would tell him whether or not his journey would be successful. For people in those days believed that the priest could tell what was going to happen in the future. The priest left David and went away by himself to pray for an answer.

As Ahimelech left him David was startled to see among the worshipers one of Saul's shepherds named Doeg. David thought: He will surely tell the king.

Then another thought came to him: How fortunate he has not heard the news and so cannot tell Ahimelech and keep him from helping me!

A moment later Ahimelech returned and said, "Thy journey will end happily."

David thanked him and hurried away. First he went to Bethlehem and warned his family of the danger that threatened them because of him. He and his brothers and a few companions then hid themselves in a rocky gorge, with many caves in its sides. Many others, who admired David and loved fighting and adventure, came and joined him until he had a band of about four hundred men with him in the hills.

In the meanwhile Doeg had returned to the king and told him all that had happened at the tabernacle. Saul was very angry. He sent for Ahimelech and the other priests. When they stood before him he accused them of treachery, of plotting with his enemies against him. Ahimelech explained that he thought David was on an errand for the king and told Saul just what David had said, but it did no good. Saul was too angry to listen. He ordered the soldiers to kill all the priests for he declared that they favored David. But the soldiers refused to strike priests, for they were men of God and had done no wrong. This drove Saul into a perfect fury. He turned to Doeg and said, "Turn thou and kill the priests." Doeg did as the king said.

In the confusion Abiathar, one of Ahimelech's sons, escaped and fled to David and told the sorrowful story. David was overcome with remorse. Over and over he said, "I am to blame for the death of these men. I am to blame." But his sorrow could not help them. All he could do was protect the son who was left, so

he said, "Stay with me; fear not; he that seeks thy life seeks mine; with me thou wilt be safe."

So Abiathar joined David's men, and David showed him every kindness. But the men noticed that whenever David looked upon the lad his face grew sad and often his lips moved, and they knew he was saying to himself, "I am to blame; I am to blame."

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Ahimelech, *a priest.*
David, *a young man, a fugitive.*
Doeg, *a shepherd, servant to Saul.*
Abiathar, *a young priest, son of Ahimelech.*
Worshipers, *men and women.*
Two boys, *candle-bearers.*
Two priests.
Six singers, *men.*
Shammah, Eliab, Abishai, Abiah, Abinidab } *companions to David.*
Soldiers with David.
Servant to David.

COSTUMES:

Ahimelech, Abiathar and priests. Robes appropriate for a priest. Ahimelech's more elaborate.

Candle-bearers and singers. Dark costumes reaching to ankles; dark head-dress.

David. In Scene I, handsome oriental costume. In Scene II, more simple.

Doeg and worshipers. Ordinary Hebrew dress.
Soldiers and companions. Plain dark dress, no mantles.

PROPERTIES:
Altar.
Candles.
Incense.
Shewbread.
Tray and white cloth.
Sword.

PLACES:
Act I. In the tabernacle.
If a simple production is all that is desired the platform may be used without scenery. If a set is preferred the temple may be represented by two tall white columns made from beaver board or by white cloth stretched over wooden frames. Boys who have had manual training can easily make them. Draperies, placed at sides and back of stage, complete the effect.
A box covered with cloth serves for an altar.
Act II. David's hiding-place in the mountains.
Little setting is needed as most of the stage will be occupied by characters. It is a simple matter to represent trees, boulders and caves.

ACT I

SCENE: *In the tabernacle. Altar center back. On it are candles burning and incense rising. In the center is the shewbread covered by a white cloth.*

Ahimelech stands in front of altar facing audience. Worshipers, men and women, stand on either side but at a short distance away so as to leave Ahimelech and the altar by themselves. Sound of chanting from men of the temple who enter at rear, pass down aisle of room and onto the stage. Leading the procession are two boys bearing lighted candles, next comes a priest walking alone. It is to him Ahimelech gives the old shewbread which is on the altar. Following comes the priest bearing the new shewbread. This is on a tray, covered with a white cloth and rests on the extended hands of the priest. Behind the priest comes six singers (men) walking two by two.

The hymn should be one of supplication, one that is used in Church or Sunday School. The following from "Responses to the Commandments," found in nearly every church hymnal, is appropriate:

"Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law.
Lord have mercy upon us and write all these, thy laws, in our hearts, we beseech thee."

"The Church Hymnal," Century Co., No. 517.
"The Methodist Hymnal," No. 738.

As they approach the platform the line divides, a boy and three singers going to either side. The first priest passes to the left, the second to the right and remain facing the altar.

[*As singing ceases.*

Ahimelech. Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his

inheritance. [*Turns and faces altar.*] Let thy mercy, O Lord, be upon us, according as we hope in thee. [*Removes bread, gives it to priest who withdraws to one side.*] The Lord established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children. That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. [*Takes shewbread and places it on altar.*] Accept our offering, O Lord.

All. Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.

[*David, unseen, peers cautiously in.*

Ahimelech. Amen and amen. [*Faces audience. Procession passes out in order of entrance, singing. Ahimelech discovers David, gives a start of surprise, then waits for him to approach.*]

David. [*Bowing before the priest.*] The Lord be with thee.

Ahimelech. Why art thou here alone?

David. I followed the king's command.

Ahimelech. Are his men without?

David. Nay, my lord, I am alone save for a servant, for the king said, "Let no man know anything of the business on which I send thee and what I have commanded thee."

Ahimelech. Is thy business with me? Why hast thou come here to the temple?

David. I came away hastily, not stopping to provide for my journey. Give me then bread that I may have food by the way.

Ahimelech. Gladly would I grant thy request, but there is no bread here.

David. No bread here?

Ahimelech. Nay, no common bread such as thou desirest.

David. "No common bread," thou sayest. Hast thou any bread here?

Ahimelech. This is the day when we place the shew-bread before the Lord for an offering. The old bread which was taken from the altar is here, but as thou knowest it is considered holy and not supposed to be eaten. If thy mission is urgent, then as a special favor thou mayest have the hallowed bread.

David. I will take it, for I must have bread.

Ahimelech. [*To Abiathar.*] Bring me the shew-bread that was just taken from the altar. Have it well wrapped in strong cloth.

[*Abiathar bows and exits.*

David. I thank thee for thy kindness.

Ahimelech. Is there more I can do for thee?

David. I did not stop to take my sword or any weapon with me for the king's business required haste. Is there not a spear or sword here that I may have?

Ahimelech. There is the sword of Goliath, the Philistine whom thou slewest. It is here wrapped in a cloth. If that will suit thee thou mayest take it. I have no other.

David. I will take it for there is none like it.

[*Ahimelech goes to side of altar and returns with sword.*

David. [*Taking sword.*] I thank thee. Thy kindness will be remembered.

Ahimelech. Can I serve thee further?

David. Wilt thou enquire of the Lord whether or not I shall be successful?

Ahimelech. If thou wilt wait here, I will go yonder and enquire.

[*Exit Ahimelech. David feels of sword, walks to and fro showing impatience at delay. Suddenly notices Doeg among the worshipers. Stands still, fearing treachery.*

David. [*Aside.*] Doeg, the Edomite! He will surely tell the king. [*Starts quickly toward exit, motions to servant outside. Enter servant. In low tone.*] Take this bread and let us not wait for Ahimelech. Doeg, the Edomite, is here. He will surely tell the king.

Servant. He cannot know that Saul is angry with thee again else he would have told Ahimelech and kept him from giving thee the bread and the sword.

David. It would seem so.

Servant. Would it not be better to wait for Ahimelech and the message lest he become suspicious of thy haste?

David. Thou speakest wisely. Watch from without and I will wait. [*Exit servant. David returns to former place. Enter Ahimelech.*] What is the word?

Ahimelech. The journey will end happily.

David. [*Bowing before the priest.*] Thy words are good to my ears. I thank thee [*rising*], now I must hasten on my way.

Ahimelech. The Lord be with thee.

David. And with thee. [*Exit David.*

Ahimelech. Who is so faithful among all the king's servants as David? He goeth at his bidding and is honorable in his house. The eyes of the Lord are

upon the righteous and his ears are open unto their cry. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

CURTAIN

ACT II

PLACE: *A cave in the forest. This may be represented by dark green screens and curtain. Rocks, fashioned out of wood and covered with gray cloth or paper, will heighten the effect and can easily be made by the boys. David's family and followers are in the cave; some stand, others are sitting, one or two may be busy cleaning their weapons. The form of address is changed in Act II to emphasize the contrast between a scene with priests in the tabernacle and soldiers in camp.*

Shammah. [*Walking about.*] This is a good hiding-place. Saul can never get us here for we are too well protected.

Eliab. We should see and hear his men long before they could enter the cave.

Abishai. I have been around in all the different caves counting the men. I think there are about four hundred who have joined David here.

Abiah. Was it not just like David to think of his family first and warn us of the danger we were in? For of course the first place Saul would look for David would be at the home of one of his brothers.

Abinadab. We were not long in coming here. The news that Saul was angry again with David spread fast and within a few hours all his friends had gathered.

Abiah. I wish Saul would stop chasing David and let us stay at home. The king knows David will not kill him, and yet he keeps after him.

Abishai. He nearly captured David this time. He barely escaped with his life.

Abiah. He did not stop even to take a sword or any food. [*Enter David.*

All. Hail to David!

Abiah. We were just saying what a narrow escape you had.

David. I did not leave any too soon. I am sure Saul would have taken my life if he had caught me.

Abishai. What would you have done if Ahimelech had not helped you?

David. I do not know. Poor old man, I wonder if he knows now that he helped the king's enemy. He would not have given me the sword, much less holy bread, if he had known I was fleeing from the king. I told him I was on important business for the king.

[*Men laugh.*

Abiah. So you were—important business for the next king of Israel.

David. You must not speak of that yet. I was sorry to deceive the old priest but I could think of no other way to get the things I needed.

Shammah. What better way could you wish? You got what you wanted, didn't you?

David. I would rather have gotten them without lying to the priest.

Shammah. Lying? Isn't that rather a strong word? I call it being quick-witted.

Abiah. Even if it were a lie it hurt no one and it helped to save your life so there was no harm in it.

David. Yet I wish I had not deceived the man.

Abinadab. Why talk of so silly a matter when there are important things to discuss? What plans have you for our protection? Are we to stay hidden in these caves or go to battle?

Shammah. I think we should go out and fight Saul and his men. After one good battle perhaps the king would stay at home and stop hunting for us.

David. My plan is to— [*Enter soldier hurriedly.*

Soldier. [*To David.*] A man is coming over the hills!

Shammah. A spy!

Soldier. He seems to be in a great hurry.

David. Is he alone?

Soldier. As far as I can tell. He is coming toward our cave as if he knew the way.

Abishai. Some one knows our hiding-place.

David. Stay here. I will go out and look.

Abiah. You stay here. I'll go. [*Exit Abiah.*

Abinadab. Can there be a traitor in our midst? Some one must have told the king where we are.

[*Voices outside. Men listen.*

Abiah. Why do you come here?

Abiathar. [*Excitedly.*] David! I must see David at once.

Abiah. What do you want of him?

Abiathar. A terrible thing has happened. He must know it. Where is he?

Abiah. Who are you?

Abiathar. I am the youngest son of Ahimelech the priest.

Abiah. Ahimelech? The one who helped David?

Abiathar. The same. Where is David? Take me to him!

Abiah. Throw down your sword.

Abiathar. [*Throws sword on ground.*] I come as a friend.

Abiah. Follow me. [*Abiah and Abiathar enter.*

Abiah. [*To David.*] This fellow says he has news for you.

Abiathar. [*Throwing himself at David's feet.*] Save me! Save me! For Saul would kill me.

David. Why should he kill you?

Abiathar. I am the son of Ahimelech the priest.

David. What wrong have you done?

Abiathar. Not any, only the king has ordered all the sons of Ahimelech killed.

David. Why?

Abiathar. Because my father gave you the sword and the bread.

Men. What!!!

David. Tell me what you mean.

Abiathar. The day you came to the temple, Doeg, a servant of Saul, was there among the worshipers.

David. I saw him.

Abiathar. He saw my father give you the sword and the bread.

David. I feared he would speak to Ahimelech and keep him from giving me the things I needed.

Abiathar. He did not know that Saul was angry at you. He had been away from the court for some days. When he left you and Saul were at peace.

David. Then what happened?

Abiathar. Five days ago Doeg returned and learned that Saul had turned against you and that you had fled. He told the king what had occurred at the temple. The king was terribly angry and sent for my father and all the members of our family. When we stood before him he accused my father of conspiring with

you against him. My father denied it, saying that he thought you were one of the king's most faithful servants and was on business for the king as you had told him.

David. That was what I told him.

Abiathar. The king would not believe my father but insisted that my father was plotting with you against his life.

David. It was not so. Ahimelech was innocent.

Abiathar. But Saul would not believe it. He said, "Thou shalt surely die, Ahimelech, thou and all thy father's house." Then he ordered the footmen who stood about to slay all our family.

Men, Oh, oh, oh!

Abiathar. But the footmen refused for, as you know, our family is set apart to be priests of the Lord. The king was terribly angry when they refused. He turned quickly to Doeg and in an awful voice cried, "Turn thou and fall upon the priests." Doeg did as the king said. Some of the men helped him. They killed my father and all my brothers. In the confusion I made my escape. [*Pause.*] I am the only one left of the house of Ahimelech, and Saul will seek my life when he learns that I escaped.

David. I knew that day when I saw Doeg in the temple that he would surely tell Saul. I am to blame for the deaths of all the persons of your father's house —the priests of the temple. [*David buries head in hand, overcome with grief and remorse.*]

Abiah. [*Quietly approaches and places hand on David's arm.*] My brother, do not blame yourself so much. You did not know that your words would mean Ahimelech's death.

David. [*Raising head.*] I am to blame for the

death of all those men. A poor way to return a kindness. If only I had not lied to Ahimelech!

Abishai. He would not have given you the sword if you had not.

David. [*Impatiently.*] Surely I could have made my escape some other way. How would you like to live with the thought that you had caused the death of a friend, to say nothing of the deaths of scores of other innocent men?

Abiathar. [*Rises.*] My father did not blame you, neither do I. You meant no harm to us.

David. But I blame myself. All I can do now is to protect you. [*Places hand on Abiathar's shoulder.*] Stay here with me, fear not; for he that seeks my life seeks yours. Never will I let you go. With me you are safe.

Abiathar. There is nowhere else for me to go. Would I were a soldier instead of a priest that I might fight with you!

David. [*Gently.*] There are many soldiers here but no other priest. We shall have need of you. [*To soldier.*] Take Abiathar yonder; give him food and a place to rest. [*Exeunt Abiathar and soldier.*

[*David watches them leave, then leans up against the wall with his hand at his head, eyes to the ground, in attitude of deep thought. With a glance at David the men carefully withdraw. David, unmindful of their departure, keeps his position until after the curtain falls. A moment or two later, if no curtain is used, he may leave the stage slowly.*

CURTAIN

IX: A GENEROUS FOE

OR

David Spares Saul's Life

Story

For two days and nights, Saul, king of Israel, with three thousand chosen men, had been searching the rocky country between the Hebron hills and the Dead Sea. They were after David, a young outlaw, whom Saul believed to be an enemy seeking his life in order that he himself might be king. Night found them weary and footsore, facing the deep clefts and caves in which David was believed to be hiding. The king was disappointed and discouraged. The men of Ziph had come to him telling him that they knew exactly where David was hiding and that if he would go at once David could not possibly escape. But though Saul had allowed them to lead him far into the rocky country not a sign of David had he seen. The king half feared treachery among his men. He was tired and wished he were back home where he might sleep in comfort instead of camping in the open. As he stumbled along in the dark with his chief captain, Abner, by his side, he came to a spot where some of his men, who had been spying out the land, had made a place where he could rest. Gladly he dropped upon the rude couch they had prepared and covered with canvas to protect him from the dampness of the night. The men were glad to halt too and make camp, for it had been hard work climbing over rocks and search-

ing the caves. They were tired and down-hearted for they were sure that David and his men had escaped them again.

Believing themselves quite safe from attack, King Saul's men lay down and were soon fast asleep, with the king's rude tent in their midst, and his bodyguard surrounding it. So sure were they that they had missed David and his men, they did not even post a guard. It was not long until the camp was wrapped in sleep, even the king's bodyguard, worn out, slept secure in the thought of safety.

Surprised indeed would Saul and his men have been if they had realized that David and his army were but a short distance away. All that day David's scouts had watched them wherever they went and reported to David. The shadows were deepening as David and Abishai, his nephew, with two chosen friends, crept cautiously out from their hiding-places and went toward the top of a hill, from which they could see King Saul and his men. Hiding there they had watched the men as they made a tent and bed for the king. They saw the soldiers as they made ready for the night. They noted how tired they were and in amazement saw them leave the camp unguarded, thinking that no enemy was near. The only precaution taken was to place the king's tent in the middle of the camp.

Suddenly David asked, "Who will go down with me into Saul's camp?" At first the men thought he meant to surprise the men while they slept; but David said he wanted to go alone with only one man for a companion; the others were to remain quietly hidden until he should call; then Abishai said he would go wherever David went.

With their spears in their hands and their knives at their belts, these two practiced warriors crept from rock to rock down the dangerous hillside into the gorge which separated them from Saul's camp. Then they climbed carefully up to the hill where the enemy lay asleep. Nearer and nearer they crept, pausing often to listen. Not a sound was heard. The men, believing themselves safe, were soundly sleeping. David whispered to Abashai that he was going on even to the king's side. Noiselessly they went on, crouching, creeping, listening, through the circle of men who, wrapped in their cloaks, were asleep. Still on they went, past the bodyguard until they reached the king's tent. There lay King Saul, wrapped in his purple cloak, asleep. His brass-headed spear, unlike any other in the kingdom, was stuck in the ground at his head, and his bottle of water was at his side.

As David looked at the king his heart was suddenly softened. He felt sorry that the king should hate him and want to kill him, for he was not trying to take the kingdom away from Saul, neither did he want to fight against his king. He only kept an army to defend himself from Saul. He wished that they might be at peace again as in the days when he had first gone to the palace to live.

But Abishai had no pity. His whole desire was to kill the king while he had a chance. "God hath delivered him into thy hand," he whispered. "Let me smite him with the spear to the earth at one stroke. I will not smite twice," he said meaningly.

David answered, "Destroy him not. Jehovah shall smite him or he shall perish in battle, but I will not stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed. Take the spear at his head, and the bottle of water by

his side and let us go." David knew they were in great danger, for it was growing lighter and any moment one of the soldiers might awaken and give the alarm that two strangers were in the camp.

Noiselessly they drew the tall spear out of the ground and taking the bottle of water from the king's side they glided away into the night. No one had heard them for they had already removed their sandals and their bare feet made no sound.

When they were a safe distance from the camp David paused and facing Saul's camp he cried out in a loud voice, "Abner, Abner, answerest thou not, Abner?" Abner answered and said, "Who art thou that criest?" David said, "Art thou not a valiant man, Abner? Why hast thou not kept watch over thy lord, the king? For there came one to destroy him. As Jehovah liveth thou art worthy of death because thou hast not kept watch over the king, and all thy men are worthy of death. See where the king's spear is and the cruse of water that was by his side!" David held up the spear in one hand and the bottle in the other before the astonished Abner and the soldiers, for it was light enough now for them to see what he had. Saul knew David's voice and said, "Is this thy voice, my son David?" David answered, "It is my voice, O lord, the king. Wherefore doth my lord pursue after his servant? What evil have I done? Had I wished thee harm could I not as easily have killed thee as to take thy spear?"

The king knew David spoke the truth, so he said, "I have done wrong; return, my son David, for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thy sight this day."

David answered, "Behold thy spear, O king; let one

of the young men come over and fetch it." Saul said, "Blessed be thou, my son David: thou shalt do mighty things, and thou shall succeed. I will no longer believe them who speak evil of thee. Return and let there be peace between us," and he bade a young man go for the spear.

David thanked Saul for his kindness and said he and his men would be glad to have peace; he would return to his men and tell them of Saul's words. David knew better than to place his life in Abner's power, for Abner was jealous of David and would gladly have seen him out of the way. So David returned to his hiding-place and King Saul led his band of armed men back on their long march through the hills. All that day he refused to listen to Abner, but believed the words David had spoken and was sorry that he had ever sought after him to kill him.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Saul, *king of Israel.*
Abner, *captain of Saul's army.*
David, *an outlaw pursued by Saul.*
Abishai, *nephew of David.*
Soldiers of Saul's army.
Comrades of David.

PROPERTIES:

Boughs and blankets for Saul's bed.
Spears for soldiers. Spears may be made of wood covered with silver paint. Special spear for Saul.
Water jar. Piece of canvas for tent.

COSTUMES:

Soldiers. Rather close-fitting one-piece garment of burlap or any heavy cloth. Skins of animals bound about waist with heavy cords are an effective addition. Hats may be made of burlap and painted with aluminum paint to which a little glue has been added. This gives the appearance of metal helmets.

Saul and *Abner.* Suits and helmets covered with the aluminum to represent armor. Pieces of tin such as are used to hold tarred paper in place on the roofs of houses may be sewed onto the costume. They add to the appearance and produce a clanking sound whenever the wearer moves. Saul's suit should be more elaborate than Abner's.

David. Costume similar to soldiers, only of a brilliant shade, preferably scarlet.

PLACE:

Woods. If play is given out of doors, a secluded spot suitable for camping and with an elevation at one side should be selected. The branches for Saul's bed should be broken off by the soldiers while talking. If play is given indoors, a green back-drop against which have been placed small trees and branches will serve the purpose. The effect of breaking the branches can readily be achieved.

ACT I

SCENE: *A woods. A few soldiers enter slowly as if tired, pass a short distance across the stage where they are stopped by one of their number.*

First Soldier. Wait. Is not this spot a good place in which to spend the night?

Second Soldier. King Saul is weary. He cannot go much farther.

Third Soldier. Night is near. Let us pitch his tent here and have everything ready for the king when he appeareth.

Fourth Soldier. Thy suggestion is a good one. Let us get to work.

[*Men secure branches, make a bed at left, spread a blanket over it, then stretch a piece of canvas from one tree to another so as to protect the sleeper. The men indulge in conversation that would be natural under the circumstances.*

Fifth Soldier. The king will be glad to rest. He is discouraged. These many hours have we searched for David but not a sign of him have we found.

First Soldier. It is strange, for did not the Ziphites say that David and his men were hiding in these woods?

Second Soldier. They must have been mistaken. We have seen no signs of fire, of camping places or men.

Third Soldier. I wish the king would stop pursuing David. He will never be caught. I do not believe that David wants Saul's life nor that he wants to be king.

First Soldier. Saul thinks so, and we must obey orders and search.

Third Soldier. I know it, but it is a waste of time. Saul would do better to stay at home and look out for his people and make David one of his trusted officers.

Fourth Soldier. Be careful. Such words sound like treason.

Second Soldier. [*Peering into woods.*] Here comes the king.

[*Enter King, followed closely by Abner and at a short distance by other soldiers.*

Saul. I am weary. I must rest a while.

First Soldier. Behold, O king. All is ready for thy comfort.

King. Ah! [*Seats himself on the bed.*] Do we camp here for the night?

Abner. It is a well-protected place. We have come far and night is near. Let us go no farther.

King. [*Dejectedly.*] We have had a long, hard day and with no success. Where can David be hiding?

Abner. He must be near. Perhaps he is hiding in the caves beyond us. To-morrow we shall surely find him. Let the king take his rest and forget his enemies.

[*Soldiers help king to make ready for the night. King removes helmet and spear, which he places near his head and within reach of his right hand, then lies down. Abner places water bottle at king's side.*

Abner. May God protect the Lord's anointed!

Saul. No harm can come to me while thou art near, my loyal captain.

Abner. To serve the king is my greatest wish. I shall camp at thy side. No one can approach the king except over my dead body.

Saul. Thou art true and faithful. If all my subjects were as loyal as thou I should be at home and peace would reign within our borders. But the king hath enemies.

Abner. Every great man hath his enemies. Let the king think no more of his to-night. They cannot molest us now, and to-morrow we shall surely overtake

them. May sleep and rest come to the Lord's anointed!

[*Abner lies down upon his blanket beside the king's bed. Soldiers lie down round about Saul and Abner. The darkness deepens. Every one sleeps. If it is not possible to indicate the night by dimming the lights the curtain may be lowered to indicate passing of time. David and three men appear just at the edge of stage, right, or are seen just over the top of the elevation. They converse in low tones.*

First Comrade. Methinks Saul hath not even seen us this day.

Second Comrade. Yet he passed so near we could hear the conversation of his soldiers.

Third Comrade. I watched them as they made camp. I was within a few feet of them when they halted and began to make ready.

David. I am going down into their camp.

Abishai. Nay, nay. They will kill thee, for a watch will be on guard.

David. Nevertheless, I am going. The Lord will protect me for I mean no harm.

Second Comrade. Thy plan is unwise. The Lord cannot protect thee if thou art reckless and willfully endanger thy life.

David. Thou art overanxious. Canst thou not trust me? I am going. Who will go with me into the camp of Saul?

First Comrade. It is sure death.

David. Who will go?

Abishai. I will go with thee.

David. It is well. The rest of you remain here. Do not come unless I call.

[*David and Abishai advance slowly toward Saul's camp. In case of an elevation of land David and Abishai disappear from view to appear below later.*

Third Comrade. Why should he go alone? Better to have taken all his men.

Second Comrade. What will become of us if harm comes to David, our leader?

Fourth Comrade. Let us follow at a distance so as to be near in case of attack.

First Comrade. Why doth Saul pursue David when David doeth no wrong?

Fourth Comrade. Saul is insane. He knoweth not what he doeth.

Second Comrade. He is jealous of David.

Fourth Comrade. Let us go round the camp to the other side lest David need our help.

Third Comrade. We must go cautiously lest the enemy hear us. Come. [*Exeunt all.*

[*David and Abishai appear at right.*

Abishai. [*Excitedly.*] Look, there is the king! I see his own spear which is unlike any other in the kingdom.

David. [*Holds up hand for silence.*] The king and his men are worn out searching for me.

Abishai. God hath delivered thine enemy into thy hands this night. Now, therefore, let me smite him. I will strike with the king's own spear. I shall not need to strike twice. [*Moves forward a step.*]

David. [*Grasping him by the arm.*] Hold. Destroy him not. For who shall stretch forth his hand against the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?

Abishai. Surely the Lord hath delivered him into thy hand that thou shouldst kill him.

David. The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against his anointed. As the Lord liveth he shall smite him, or he shall perish in battle. I shall never take his life.

Abishai. [*Eagerly.*] I will do it for thee. He is thy enemy and should die before he can do thee harm.

David. I cannot consent to thy plan. Listen to me. Go to Saul's side and take his spear that is at his head and the jar of water by his side and bring them to me here, and thou shalt see what I will do.

[*Abishai cautiously approaches, going in and out and around the men until he secures the spear and water jar. Then as carefully returns and gives them to David.*

David. [*In loud voice.*] Abner, ho, Abner, guardian of King Saul.

Abishai. Awake, Abner, thy king needeth thee.

[*Abner, king and soldiers stir.*

David. Abner, Abner, answereth thou not?

[*Abner springs to feet, feels for spear.*

Abner. Who art thou that criest unto me?

David. Art thou not a valiant man, Abner? Who is like unto thee in Israel?

Abner. What dost thou want of me?

David. Wherefore hast thou not kept watch over thy lord, the king? Whilst thou wast sleeping there came one to destroy Saul, the king. As the Lord liveth thou art worthy of death, because thou hast not kept better watch over thy king. Yea, all ye, his soldiers, are worthy of death.

Abner. We were all weary after the long, hard march and we must have slept even when we did not mean to.

David. Look now and see where is the king's spear and the cruse of water that was by his side.

[*Commotion among Saul's soldiers.*

Soldiers. The spear! The king's spear is gone!

David. Findest thou the spear, Abner?

Abner. [*To Saul.*] It is David.

Saul. Is it thy voice, my son David?

David. It is my voice, O lord, my king. Why doth my lord thus pursue his servant? What evil have I done thee? Thine eyes have seen how that the Lord delivered thee into my hand this night. Some one bade me kill thee but I did not. I would not lift up my hand against the Lord's anointed. Yet thou knowest it would have been as easy to kill thee as to take thy spear. I have not sinned against thee, yet thou huntest my life to take it. O, my lord, the king, let there be peace between us.

Saul. [*Stretching forth his arms toward David.*] David, David, my son. I have sinned against thee. Return unto me for I will do thee no harm. I will not believe those who say, "David seeketh thy life," for this day thou hast spared me. I have played the fool and erred exceedingly. From this day on there shall be peace between thee and me.

David. [*Holding up king's spear.*] Behold the king's spear. Let one of the young men come over and take it.

Abner. [*To one of the soldiers.*] Go and bring the spear.

[*Soldier approaches David half fearfully, takes spear and jar and returns.*

David. As I have saved thy life this night so may the king preserve me. May the Lord deliver us from further trouble.

Saul. Blessed art thou, my son David. Thou shalt do great things and thou shalt prevail. Wilt thou come with us now?

David. I thank thee, O king, for thy favor, but I must return unto my men who wait near by. When I have told them of thy wish to be at peace with me, thy servant, they will rejoice, and we shall return to be thy loyal subjects.

Saul. The Lord go with thee.

David. The Lord bless thee and keep thee.

[*Exeunt David and Abishai. Saul stands motionless watching them depart.*

Abner. [*Approaching Saul stealthily.*] Trust him not, O my lord, the king. He but sought to spy upon thee to see how many soldiers were with thee.

Saul. Nay, nay, he could have surprised us and killed us while we slept had evil been in his heart.

Abner. [*Sneeringly.*] The king is easily deceived. Dost thou think any man would hesitate to kill his enemy if he had a chance? David did not dare risk his own life. Let us arise and pursue him while he is yet near.

Saul. It shall not be. Thou art ever thinking evil of some one. David is an upright man. We will return unto the city. I will no longer seek him to harm him for he hath spared my life.

[*Abner disappointed, moves away.*

First Soldier. Shall we break camp, my lord?

Saul. At once. I would return home that I may be alone to think. Make haste and follow. [*To Abner.*] Come.

[*Exeunt Saul and Abner. Men fold up king's blanket and tent.*

Third Soldier. This is the Lord's doing. For thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield. [*Pause.*] I'd like to be a soldier in David's army. [*Exeunt soldiers.*

CURTAIN

X: A REWARD FOR HOSPITALITY

OR

Elisha Heals the Son of the Shunammite

Story

One summer day as Elisha the prophet came slowly into a place called Shunem a rich woman saw him and invited him to come into her home and rest. He was hot and tired and dusty and glad to rest awhile. The servant removed Elisha's mantle and sandals and bathed his feet. Another brought him food and drink. The Shunammite woman sang to him as he ate and her husband, a farmer, talked with the prophet who, too, had been a farmer in the days before he became a preacher and a teacher.

The woman said to her husband, "The prophet is a holy man of God. Let us make him a little room on the wall of our house. Let us put in it a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick. It shall be his room to use whenever he comes this way."

The farmer was pleased with her plan and said he would build the room so that the prophet could enter it by an outside staircase and not even have to speak to any one when he came unless he wished to.

So their house became a home for the prophet. Whenever he passed by he stopped in the chamber built for him. Elisha thought at first that perhaps there was some great favor the Shunammite woman and her husband wanted to ask of him but when he offered to

help them in any way he could they said there was nothing.

In surprise Elisha said, "You have been kind to me and provided for my comfort, surely there is something I can do for you?"

The woman answered, "I have an abundance. I am happy and contented."

Elisha asked, "Shall I not speak to the king for a position for your husband?"

The woman answered, "He is a farmer, and we would rather live here in the country than in the city of the king."

Again Elisha said, "Surely there is something I can do. There must be some way in which I can repay you for your thoughtfulness."

She smiled and answered, "We are honored to have the prophet of God in our home. All we ask is that you come to us whenever you pass this way that we may serve in a small way the man who is always helping some one else." Then she left the prophet.

Not long afterward when the prophet came again into the home he found that God had sent a little son to the Shunammite woman and her husband. If they had been happy before they were doubly so now. He laid his hand in blessing on the child's head and he, too, loved the boy.

As the months and years passed the child grew and the love of the parents for him grew also. One hot day the child went out into the field where his father and the reapers were busy. After he had been running and playing awhile the child suddenly fell at his father's feet crying, "My head! My head!"

The father knew at once that it was the heat that had made the boy sick. The men carried him home

and told his mother what had happened. Anxiously the mother watched the child. She held him, she bathed his head, she rocked him, she sang to him, but he grew worse and worse. Finally she carried him upstairs and put him on the prophet's bed. Then she went out, shut the door and left him there. Quickly she ordered a servant to bring the donkeys and ride with her to find the prophet.

Elisha was standing in front of his home on Mount Carmel looking down into the valley. Even when the woman was a long way off the prophet thought he recognized her. Calling his servant, Gehazi, to him, he said, "Isn't that the Shunammite coming?"

Gehazi looked and answered, "It certainly is, but why does she come now, it isn't the new moon or a feast day, the times when she usually takes her journeys?"

As she came nearer Elisha could see that she was sad and unhappy. "Run and meet her," he said. "Ask if all is well with her."

Gehazi went to meet her and called:

"Is anything the matter? Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with your child?"

Now the woman couldn't talk of her trouble to the servant, she wanted only Elisha the prophet, so she answered, "All is well."

Elisha knew from the way she spoke that all was not well, so he waited for her to come nearer. The woman dismounted and when she came to Elisha she fell on the ground at his feet and her sobs shook her whole body but she did not speak a word. Gehazi went along to lift her up but the prophet said, "Let

her alone, for she is in trouble. When she is ready she will tell me."

Then the woman said through her tears, "My son—I have had him only a little while, surely the Lord will not take him away from me now." And she told the prophet all that had happened.

Elisha said to his servant, "Take my staff and go quickly. Do not speak to any one on the way; even if any one speaks to you do not answer. Go at once to the child and lay my staff on his face."

Quickly Gehazi obeyed. But the woman was not satisfied. She said, "I will not leave unless you go with me. You must see the child yourself."

The prophet was sorry for her, so gently he led her back to her donkey, and, mounting his own, he rode by her side back over the long miles to her home. Elisha went alone into the little room. There he saw the child lying as one dead upon the bed. Elisha shut the door behind him and prayed for the child's life. He put his hand on the child's face. It was cold. Elisha put his own body close to the child; his hands upon the child's hands, his face against the child's face—and as he lay there the flesh of the lad grew warm. Elisha worked over him, and little by little the child showed signs of life until at last he moved and opened his eyes.

Elisha said to Gehazi, "Call the mother."

It was not necessary to send for her to come for she was just outside the door waiting for the first word from the prophet. When he saw her, he said, "Take your son." And he carried the child to her. The woman bowed herself to the ground and thanked God and the prophet; then tenderly she took her little son

into her arms and held him close to her heart as though she could never let him go again. The prophet beckoned to Gehazi and the two stole quietly from the room, leaving the mother alone with her child, and though she cried her tears were tears of joy.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Elisha, *a prophet of God.*
The Shunammite, *a wealthy woman.*
The Farmer, *her husband.*
A little boy, *son of the Shunammite.*
Gehazi, *servant to Elisha.*
Two servants.

PROPERTIES:

Tools for farmer.
Staff for Elisha.
Basin, Towel } *for servant.*
Food and drink.
Grain for field.
Water jar.
Harvest implements for men.
Pieces of branches and bits of wood for Act. III.

COSTUMES:

Elisha. Long, loose garment with flowing sleeves worn over an undergarment of lighter color. Loose head-dress falling onto shoulders. Sandals, beard.

Farmer. One-piece garment of dark material with girdle of contrasting color. Simple head-dress.

In last act he may wear a colored mantle in addition.

Gehazi. Straight, plain garment of coarse tan material, tied at waist by cord. Small head-dress of bright color. Sandals.

Shunammite. A simple, loose gown of soft bright color. A long head-dress which reaches to knees.

Child. A simple, short gown of white.

PLACES:

Act I. Home of the Shunammite woman.
Act II. A harvest field.
Act III. In front of Elisha's home.
Act IV. Same as Act I.

ACT I

SCENE: *Home of a wealthy farmer in the village of Shunem in Galilee. Farmer mending tool. Woman looking from window.*

Farmer. I always know where I shall find you when I come in from the field.

Woman. You mean at this window?

Farmer. Yes, you spend much time there.

Woman. There is so much to see. Come here and let me show you. [*Farmer goes to her side.*] Those beautiful wooded hills in the distance are a part of Carmel. I used to see the smoke rising from the sacrifices made to Baal until Elijah built an altar to God. If you follow those high cliffs down to the shore you can see the blue Mediterranean. Between the sea and us are fields of yellow grain.

Farmer. It is beautiful.

Woman. But there is more to see. Look at the people. Some one is always crossing the plain on the way to Nazareth or some village in the Jordan valley.

Farmer. Traders mostly.

Woman. But not all. See that old man who walks slowly as if he had come from a long way?

Farmer. The man with the young servant by his side? I know him.

Woman. Yes, he is Elisha, the man of God. Often he passes through our village. I always watch until he is out of sight. He seems so good and kind. He is always helping some one. I wish I could help him.

Farmer. He was a farmer, too, before he became a prophet. That is why he understands the people so well.

Woman. Why not invite him in to rest a while?

Farmer. Do you think he would stop?

Woman. At least we can ask him. I should like to make a little chamber for him on the wall; and put in it a bed, a table, a stool and a candlestick. Then when he comes this way he could stop here and rest. He is a holy man of God, and it is good for us to help him.

Farmer. I am willing. Let us call to him.

Woman. [*Waving hand.*] O thou prophet of God, come to us here. [*To man.*] Go quickly and bring him in.

Farmer. Have food and water brought.

[*Exit man.*

Woman. [*Claps hands. Enter servant.*] Bring bread and fruit and milk, for the prophet of God is at the door. [*Exit servant.*

Farmer. [*Off-stage.*] Enter.

[*Enter Elisha and farmer. Farmer claps hands. Servant enters with towels and water.*

Woman. Welcome to our home. We saw that you were hot and tired with your long walk. Will you not rest and let us serve you with food?

Elisha. You are very kind. I am tired and gladly accept your kind invitation.

[*Servant removes prophet's cloak and sandals and goes through motion of washing his feet.*

Woman. I have often wanted to invite you to stop and rest in our home.

[*Enter servant with food, which she sets before prophet.*

Prophet. You are kind.

Woman. Eat and be refreshed. It is a pleasure to serve one who is always serving others.

Farmer. Why not sing to the prophet while he is eating? Your songs always cheer me. Surely they will please our guest.

Prophet. Do. It will make me forget how tired I am.

[*Woman sings. Any appropriate song will answer.*

Prophet. [*As song ends.*] Your song and your thoughtfulness have refreshed me. Now I can proceed on my way rested and happy.

Farmer. One thing more we wish to tell you. [*To Woman.*] The plan was yours. You must tell the prophet.

Prophet. Is there something I may do for you? A position for this man in the king's army perhaps?

Farmer. No. No. I am a farmer unused to fighting. My place is in the fields.

Prophet. [*To Woman.*] How may I serve you?

Woman. We ask not help from the prophet. We ask to serve the man of God. Hear our plan. We would build for you a little chamber on the wall of our house. In it we will put a bed, a table, a stool and a candle. The room will be yours. Whenever you pass this way the room will be ready for you. There you may rest and sleep or study or write.

Farmer. The room will be built partly on the wall and partly on the roof so that you may go up and down by the outside wall without disturbing any one or wasting time to call a servant.

Prophet. No one has ever been so kind to me. I shall think of this house as my home. May the Lord bless you for your kindness to his prophet. Now I must continue on my journey.

Woman. You will not forget us?

Prophet. When next I pass through this village I will stop and see if the chamber is ready.

Farmer. It shall be prepared immediately.

Prophet. The Lord be with you.

Farmer. And with you. [*Exit Prophet.*

Woman. How pleased he was! I am glad we thought of the room.

Farmer. I will go at once and give orders for it to be made.

Woman. I will go with you. We must select the very best place on the wall for the prophet's room.

[*Exeunt man and woman.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE: *A harvest field. Men cut and gather grain. The day is hot, and the men show their sufferings from the heat as they work. First one and then another goes to the water jars for a drink. The little boy plays about in the grain, following the men, tumbling on the ground and apparently chasing butterflies.*

First Reaper. How can he run and play in the heat?

Second Reaper. A child does not mind the heat.

Third Reaper. He is so happy to be here that he can't keep still.

Fourth Reaper. How did his mother let him come to-day? She seldom lets him go so far from home.

Fifth Reaper. He is her only child and she is afraid he may get hurt.

Sixth Reaper. He is a dear little fellow.

Fourth Reaper. [*To boy.*] Ho, lad, come here.

[*Boy comes running and leaping.*

Boy. What is it?

Fourth Reaper. Did your mother say you might come into the field this hot day?

Boy. [*Whirls on one foot.*] I did not ask her to-day.

Sixth Reaper. Did you run away.

Boy. [*Whirling again.*] No-o-o, I just came away without bothering her. Two of the neighbors were with her and I did not like to disturb her. [*Men laugh.*] Look. See me jump over that pile of grain. [*Jumps.*]

First Reaper. Come here to me.

Boy. [*Approaching him.*] Please don't send me home.

First Reaper. You should not have come into the field to-day. The sun is very hot. See how red and wet your face is.

Boy. That is nothing. Look at the men. They are hot, too, yet they have to work.

First Reaper. But you are a child. I wish you were at home with your mother.

Boy. I won't get in your way. [*Enter father.*] Oh, there's my father! [*Boy runs to father.*

Father. Why, son, how came you here?

Boy. [*Putting hand to head.*] I wanted—to—be—with—you. [*Drops at father's feet.*]

Father. [*Bending over boy.*] What is the matter?

Boy. Oh, my head, my head!

[*Reapers gather near.*

Father. [*Picks up boy.*] Did you hurt your head?

Boy. My head, my head!

First Reaper. It is the sun!

Second Reaper. A sunstroke! He has been running and playing in this great heat.

Boy. [*Clutching throat.*] My throat, my throat, give me a drink!

Father. Bring the water.

[*Second Reaper goes for jar.*

Boy. [*Cries and throws arms about.*] My head, my head!

[*Man returns with jar. Gives boy a drink.*

Father. We must take the child to his mother.

First Reaper. Let me carry the child while you go ahead and tell his mother.

Father. Perhaps you are right. She must be told but I dread to tell her.

First Reaper. It is better to tell her than to let her see the child in this condition without any warning.

Father. [*Puts boy in man's arm.*] You are right. I'll go ahead and tell her and have things ready for the child. [*Exit father.*

Sixth Reaper. Two of you go with the boy and the rest of us will go back to work. This grain must be cared for.

Fourth Reaper. I'll go along and carry the water. He may cry for another drink.

[*Exit First Reaper with boy, followed by Fourth Reaper with water jar. Other reapers, thoughtful and quiet, return to work.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

PLACE: *Elisha's home on Carmel. Gehazi is busy picking up bits of firewood. Elisha stands looking out across the plain.*

Elisha. Is not that the Shunammite yonder?

Gehazi. [*Standing and looking in the direction indicated.*] It rides like her. Surely that is her servant by her side, but why comes she now? It is not the new moon or the Sabbath, her usual times for taking a journey.

Elisha. They come in haste. Something must be wrong. Run and meet her. [*Exit Gehazi.*

Gehazi. [*Off-stage.*] Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?

Woman. [*Slowly and sorrowfully.*] It is well.

Elisha. [*Shaking head.*] Her words and her voice do not go together. All is not well.

Woman. [*Off-stage to servant.*] I will dismount now and go on to the prophet alone.

[*Enter woman, who throws herself down before the prophet, grasps his feet and prostrates herself with face to the ground.*

Elisha. What is it, my daughter?

Gehazi. [*Enters and goes forward as if to lift the woman up.*] She may be ill.

Elisha. Let her alone. Her soul is troubled. She will tell me when she is ready.

Woman. My son! The Lord gave him to me, surely he will not take him away so soon?

Elisha. Is the child ill?

Woman. Even now he is on the bed in your chamber on the wall. He seems like one dead; his eyes are closed, he speaks not, he knows me not.

Elisha. [*To Gehazi.*] Take my staff and go at once. Speak to no man by the way; lay the staff on the face of the child. [*Exit Gehazi.*

Woman. [*Excitedly. Raising hands in supplication but remaining on knees.*] No, no. I will not leave you. No servant is great enough to help me. You must come with me. Only you can save my child.

Elisha. [*Placing hand on her head.*] It shall be as you ask. Rise. [*Helps her to rise.*] We will leave at once.

Woman. I knew you would help me. You, too, love the child. [*Exeunt Elisha and woman.*

Elisha. I will do all I can. We must ask the Lord's help, too.

CURTAIN

ACT IV

PLACE: *Same as Act I. Woman seated by window, but in this scene she is not looking out. Her eyes are cast down and her whole attitude expresses sorrow and anxiety.*

[*Enter Gehazi.*

Woman. [*Rising quickly.*] The child?

Gehazi. He is not yet awake. The prophet is still with him. The door is shut. I can tell you no more. I heard the prophet praying to God, I heard him moving about, I heard him go to the child and call his name. Now all is still.

Woman. [*Almost in a whisper.*] Not a sound has come from the room for some time. I fear what it may mean.

Gehazi. Fear not so long as the prophet is there. Where is the child's father?

Woman. He is watching that no one disturbs the prophet. [*Enter Farmer.*

Gehazi. Here he is now. I'll watch.

[*Exit Gehazi.*

Woman. Is there any word?

Farmer. None. [*Sound of footsteps off-stage.*

Woman. [*In whisper.*] What is that?

Farmer. The prophet is moving. [*Enter Gehazi.*

Gehazi. The prophet is coming down the stairs.

Woman. [*With hand on her heart, waits, dreading to meet the prophet.*] He comes, but what will he tell us? [*Enter prophet with child in arms.*

Elisha. Take the child.

[*Child reaches out one hand to her.*

Woman. [*Throws herself at Elisha's feet.*] God

be praised and thanks be unto you, his prophet. [*Gathers the child in her arms.*] He is alive and well.

Elisha. He is still weak from the effects of the sun. He must be tenderly cared for and not allowed to play in the heat again for many days.

Farmer. How can we ever thank you for your goodness to us?

Elisha. I want no thanks. You are my friends. These many years have you cared for me and asked no favors in return. Your sorrow is my sorrow, your joy is my joy.

Woman. [*Rising, but holding child by hand.*] Leave us not to-night, but stay to share our joy.

Elisha. If it pleases you I will return to my chamber on the wall instead of to my tent on Carmel.

Woman. That is my wish.

[*Exeunt Elisha and Gehazi. Father moves over and takes child's other hand. With the child between them the farmer and the mother look fondly at him as the curtain falls, or if there is no curtain the father may carry the child off the stage, the mother walking by his side.*

CURTAIN

XI: A CAPTIVE MAIDEN'S PATRIOTISM

OR

The Jewish Maid in the House of Naaman

Story

Of all the captains of Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, none was so brave, so loyal, so popular as Naaman. Whenever he went forth to battle or made a raid on some near-by province he seemed always to be successful. No undertaking was too difficult, no danger too threatening, no enemy too powerful to daunt Naaman. Every one from the king on his throne to the humblest worker on the street sang the praises of Naaman, the young captain.

But Naaman was not happy, nor was his wife. They had a secret which no success or fame could make them forget. Naaman was a leper! He was afflicted with that hideous disease which causes the bones to separate and the joints to drop off, making the person a hideous object from which every one flees. No cure has ever been found for leprosy and so Naaman knew that it would not be long that he could lead the king's army. He dreaded the time when he must go away from home and live where no one could see him.

That was the reason why Mara, his wife, was so often in tears. The little Hebrew maid who waited on Mara wondered and wondered why her mistress

wept so much when she seemed to have everything to make her happy.

On one of his slave raids into Israel Naaman had brought this little maid home with him. She was so pretty with her rosy cheeks and black eyes that instead of being sold she was given to Mara to be her very own maid—to wait on her when she was dressing, to run errands and to go with her mistress when she went out into the street.

As the weeks passed by the little maid had become very fond of her mistress and Naaman. So it grieved her to find her mistress weeping and to see Naaman grow sad when no one was around. Then one day she learned the secret—Naaman was a leper!

But the news did not make the Hebrew maid weep. Instead she looked up into the face of her mistress and said, "I wish my master were with the prophet who is in Israel. He could cure him of his leprosy."

Eagerly Mara questioned the child as to the meaning of her words. Just as eagerly the Hebrew child told her of Elisha, the prophet of God, who lived on Mount Carmel in Samaria. She told how he spent his time in teaching and helping the people of Israel. But mostly she told of the wonderful power the prophet had to make sick people well and how many he had cured. Again the child said, "If only my master could see the prophet he would heal him."

Naaman would not believe the stories the child told about the prophet's power to heal the sick; but Mara was willing to believe anything if there was any possible chance of Naaman being made well. After much coaxing Naaman finally agreed to visit the prophet and see if he could help him.

At that time there was peace between the Syrians

and the Israelites. So the king of Syria gave Naaman a letter to the king of Israel telling the reason for the visit. Naaman took gifts of silver and gold, many beautiful costly garments, and the letter and accompanied by his soldiers, rode away in his chariot to visit Elisha the prophet.

When the king of Israel opened the letter he read: "I have sent Naaman, one of my captains, to you that you may heal him of leprosy."

He was both astonished and troubled at the words. He exclaimed, "How can I cure a man of leprosy? This is but an excuse for the king of Syria to make war against me."

The prophet Elisha, who lived near by, heard what had happened. Immediately he sent word to his king:

"Do not be frightened at the message. Send the man to me."

So Naaman with his soldiers went out to the home of Elisha. As they waited, the door opened and there stood not Elisha, but his servant Gehazi. He looked at Naaman and said:

"Go wash in the Jordan seven times, and you shall be healed."

This time it was Naaman who was astonished and angry. He said to Gehazi, "I expected that the prophet would come to receive me and that he would stand before me and call upon the name of his god and put his hand on my leprosy and make me well. Are not the rivers of my own country cleaner than this muddy Jordan? Why could I not wash in them if all I need is to bathe?"

In a rage Naaman turned and started from the place. One of his soldiers quickly followed and asked, "Why not do what the prophet says even though it does seem

foolish? If he had told you to do a hard thing would you not have done it?"

At first Naaman was so angry he would not listen. Then all the men began to talk, urging him to go and dip in the Jordan to see if anything would happen. Steadily Naaman refused. He felt that the prophet had insulted him. After a long time, however, the men succeeded in persuading Naaman to go down to the Jordan. He was still hurt and disappointed and had no faith that dipping in the river could heal him. Slowly he went down into the river. When he came up after he had dipped the seventh time his flesh was clean and white like a child's. All the men shouted:

"You are healed. You are healed."

In amazement Naaman looked at himself, then at his men. He could not speak he was so astonished.

Once again Naaman stood before the home of Elisha. This time the prophet himself came to the door. Naaman bowed low before him and said:

"Now I know there is no god in all the earth but in Israel. Take, I pray, these gifts which I have brought."

Elisha answered: "I will take nothing."

Naaman urged him again and again but each time the prophet refused. At last Naaman gave up and made ready to leave. Then the old prophet lifted his hand and said quietly:

"Go in peace."

So Naaman with his horses, his chariots and his soldiers returned to Syria. In all the land there was great rejoicing, but no one was quite so pleased as the little Hebrew captive. Not only was her master well and her mistress happy, but Israel, her own country, was honored in the eyes of the Syrians.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Ben-Hadad, *king of Syria.*
Naaman, *captain in Ben-Hadad's army.*
Mara, *wife of Naaman.*
Hebrew girl, *a captive, maid to Mara.*
Elisha, *prophet in Israel.*
Gehazi, *his servant.*
Soldiers.
Servants.
Courtiers.

COSTUMES:

Ben-Hadad. Rich robes of purple and gold. Ostentatious head-dress. Scepter. Jewelry.
Naaman. Captain's uniform.
Mara. Bright, beautiful robe. Flowing veil for head-dress.
Hebrew maid. In Act I, wrinkled dress of dark material, no head-dress. In Act II, scant dress of scarlet with touches of black. Little, white kerchief for head.
Elisha. See "A Reward for Hospitality."
Gehazi. See "A Reward for Hospitality."

PROPERTIES:

Throne for king.
Chair on either side of throne.
Cord for tying captive's hands.
Jar of ointment for maid, Act II.
Letter, garments, presents for Naaman.
Staff for Elisha.

PLACES:

Act I. Palace of Ben-Hadad, king of Syria.
Act II. Home of Naaman.
Act III. In front of Elisha's home.
Act IV. Same as Act III.

ACT I

SCENE: *Palace of Ben-Hadad, king of Syria. King on his throne, courtiers standing about, all eager and expectant.*

[*Enter servant.*

Servant. [*In loud voice.*] Mara, the wife of Naaman, comes. [*Enter Mara.*

King. [*Extending hand to Mara.*] Come near, fortunate woman.

[*Mara bows low before the king.*

Mara. What is the king's will?

King. That you should hear the good news. Rise.

Mara. [*Rising.*] Is it about Naaman?

King. [*Indicating the seat at his side.*] Sit here while I tell you the wonderful news.

[*Mara takes the seat.*

Mara. Is my lord well?

King. Well and successful. Only a few moments ago a swift runner arrived here. Naaman had sent him to tell me that he was already on his way home.

Mara. The gods be praised that no harm has come to him!

King. Of all my captains none is so brave as Naaman.

Mara. The king is generous in his praise.

King. Naaman is young, but he is brave. When he sounds the king's summons all the young men hasten to answer, for they like to fight under a young captain who is not afraid of any enemy or any danger.

Mara. Where did Naaman go this last time?

King. Into the land of Israel to get more slaves for me. We need more boys to do our work, so this time I sent him not to fight but to find slave boys.

[*Sound of trumpets outside. Men rush to windows.*

Men. They come, they come!

[*Sound of shouting outside.*

King. All the people love Naaman.

[*Enter herald.*

Herald. Naaman, Captain of the King's Host.

[*Enter Naaman, who kneels before the king. Mara rises.*

King. Rise, proud warrior. Let me see the face of my valiant captain. [*Naaman rises.*

People. Naaman, Naaman, long live Naaman.

King. [*Indicating Mara.*] Behold who waits to welcome you!

[*Naaman smiles, kneels and kisses the hem of her robe.*

Mara. The king graciously sent for me that I might be with him when you arrived.

Naaman. [*Rising.*] The king is always kind.

King. Tell us of your adventure.

Naaman. It was an easy one this time, O king. The Israelites are not as strong as they used to be nor are their cities so well protected. Then, too, we were sent for slaves, not for the spoil of cities.

King. Yes, we needed lads for service. How many did you bring?

Naaman. Enough and more to supply the king. One girl also we brought, a pretty thing with dark eyes and rosy cheeks. She was just outside the city walls and we took her as we passed. [*Turning toward entrance.*] Ho, without. [*Enter soldier.*] Bring in the Hebrew maid! [*Exit soldier.*

Naaman. She is so pretty I would not leave her with the other slaves. I brought her with me to the king.

[*Enter soldier with girl, whose hands are tied. Her whole attitude is one of fright. She looks frantically about for a way of escape, then throws herself on floor at king's feet.*

King. [*To girl.*] Stand, be not fraid.

[*Girl does not move.*

Naaman. She knows not what the king says.

[*Takes girl by arm and lifts her to feet.*

Girl. [*Kneels with arms raised in supplication to Naaman.*] Have mercy, have mercy.

King. The child is terrified.

Mara. Poor little thing, why shouldn't she be?

Girl. [*Looks up quickly at sound of Mara's voice, then runs and throws herself before Mara, clinging to her feet.*] Save me, save me, kind lady.

Mara. [*Caressing her hair tenderly.*] There, there, be not afraid. We will not hurt you. [*Child grows quieter. Mara smiles at her, raises her to her feet, straightens her dress, wipes away her tears.*] It must be awful to be torn away from one's own family and carried as a slave to a strange people. O king, be kind to her.

King. Well, well, she seems to be your slave already. Take her, keep her for your own. She is a lovely child, she should serve a beautiful woman.

Mara. The king is indeed kind. I shall be happy to take the little Hebrew for my own maid.

Naaman. [*Untying child's hands.*] She shall be for your own service. She shall wait upon you, run your errands, when you go out she shall go with you. When you are at home she shall wait upon you. No one else shall use her.

Mara. [*Smiling at him.*] You are as generous as your king. [*To the king.*] If my lord, the king, will excuse me I will take the child and go my way. You two warriors will have many things to say which a woman would not understand.

King. Go and joy go with you.

[*Mara bows low to king, then bows to Naaman, then smilingly beckons to maid to follow and the two leave the room.*

Naaman. The maid will be a useful present for Mara.

King. As Naaman is useful to his king. Come, take me to see the slaves you have brought.

[*Exeunt king and Naaman.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

PLACE: *In the home of Naaman. Some months after Act I. Naaman paces to and fro in attitude of despair.*

[*Enter Mara.*

Mara. The women have just left here. All their talk was of your success. You are a mighty man, my lord. You have delivered Syria.

Naaman. Of what value is my success?

Mara. Is it nothing to be the king's favorite?

Naaman. Yes, yes, of course. I am glad to serve my king; I am glad to lead Syria to victory but how much longer shall I be able to do it?

Mara. Is your—disease worse?

Naaman. Even you dread to speak the word "leprosy."

Mara. Don't, don't! I cannot bear to hear it. Why should you, a good man, young and brave, have this terrible sickness? [*Enter maid with vial in hand.*

Naaman. I do not know. I only know that I have leprosy and that there is no cure for it.

Mara. And if there is no cure?

Naaman. Then I must die, but not until my fingers have dropped off, and my body fallen to pieces bit by bit; not until I have become a horror from which people will hide their faces and run away.

Mara. [*Covering her face with her hands.*] Do not speak so. It is terrible.

Naaman. It is true.

Mara. Go to the king. Tell him the truth. Ask him if in all the world there is not some one who can cure you of your leprosy.

Naaman. There is no one.

Maid. Will my mistress let me speak? [*Mara and Naaman turn and look at maid.*] I brought the ointment you sent for; as I came in I heard the words of my master.

Naaman. Well, it does not matter. Every one will know it soon.

Mara. [*Weeping.*] Why should this dreadful thing come upon you?

Maid. I wish that my lord were with the prophet in Samaria. He would cure him of his leprosy.

Naaman and *Mara.* What!

Maid. In Samaria lives the great prophet Elisha. He could cure my lord of his leprosy.

Mara. [*Going quickly to maid. Takes her by shoulder.*] What do you mean? Speak quickly.

Naaman. The child knows not what she says.

Maid. But I do, my lord; our prophet has made many persons well.

Naaman. The Hebrews believe their prophets have magic power and can do anything they want to.

Maid. The great God, Jehovah, tells them what to do.

Naaman. You are a good child, but you are a Hebrew. Believe your prophets if you wish to; they cannot help me. I am a Syrian.

Maid. [*To Mara.*] My master does not believe me but perhaps you will. Our prophet is a man of God. He knows many things other men do not know. He has healed many sick, even those who had leprosy. Surely he would make my master well once more.

Mara. Is this really true, child?

Naaman. Bother not with her. Of course it is not true.

Maid. [*To Mara.*] Let me speak once more, then I will leave you. My master brought me a slave from Israel. I knew not what would be done to me. I was afraid. I wanted to die but the king gave me to you. Since that day I have known no fear. You brought me into your home. You and my master have treated me kindly until now I love you both dearly. It has made my heart ache to find my mistress always weep-

ing when I went to her. Now I see why. I know that our prophet can cure my lord, but my master does not believe it. Even so, will you not urge him to go to the prophet? The distance is not great. He has often gone there to get cattle and grain and slaves. Will you not ask him to go now for health and if he finds it not—well, he will be no worse off than now.

Mara. The child speaks well. Will you not do as she says?

Naaman. It will do no good.

Mara. It can do no harm. My lord, would you not do anything to be well again?

Naaman. Y-e-e-s.

Mara. Do this thing then. Who knows, perhaps this wonderful man can help you.

Naaman. Many are the stories I have heard from the Hebrews. They believe he can do anything.

Mara. Will you go?

Naaman. It can do no harm.

Mara. Go at once to the king, ask for letters to the king of Israel that he may know that this time you come in peace not in war. Go, go, wait not another hour!

Naaman. If it should be true!

Mara. It must be true.

Maid. [*Softly.*] It is true.

Naaman. I'll go and ask the king. [*Exit Naaman.*

Mara. Naaman a leper! It must not be. [*To maid.*] Do you really know of people who have been healed by this prophet.

Maid. Shall I tell you of them.

Mara. Come with me. While you brush my hair you shall tell all you know about this strange prophet and his power to heal.

Maid. If only my mistress lived in Israel she would know how great are the prophets of the living God. Of them all none has been more wonderful or more kind than Elisha, the one my master will meet.

Mara. I am impatient to hear. Come.

[*Exeunt Mara and maid.*

CURTAIN

ACT III

PLACE: *In front of Elisha's home. Some days later.*

[*Enter Naaman and escort.*

First Soldier. Can this be the place?

Second Soldier. This is where they sent us.

Naaman. [*Impatiently.*] I don't see why the king did not have the prophet come to me instead of sending me out here.

Third Soldier. The king was glad to be rid of us.

Naaman. He did not believe the words in the king's letter. He thought the request was an excuse for a quarrel.

Second Soldier. That is not strange. He knows the strength of Syria.

Naaman. All is still here. Why does not that prophet come to meet me?

First Soldier. Surely he knew you were coming, for he sent his servant to tell the king to send you here.

Second Soldier. He is busy getting ready to receive his distinguished guest.

Naaman. It will be an event in his life. Not often

does a common prophet have a great captain come to his home.

Third Soldier. Where can this prophet be? Why does he not at least come to the door? Surely he must hear the noise of our coming.

Naaman. Have you the presents ready for him?

First Soldier. [*Taking two little money-bags from his tunic.*] I have the gold and silver here.

Second Soldier. The clothing and other gifts are on the camels yonder.

Naaman. That is well. You may give him the money when I make my request. You may give him the other things after he has tried to heal me. [*To First Soldier.*] Go forward and bid the prophet come to me.

Soldier. [*Knocking on door.*] Naaman, Captain of the Army of the King of Syria, is without.

[*Enter Gehazi.*

Gehazi. [*To Naaman.*] Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and you shall be cured.

Naaman. [*Indignantly.*] What is this?

Gehazi. I have told you the words of the prophet.

Naaman. Where is this wild prophet?

Gehazi. He is within.

Naaman. Why does he not come out to me?

Gehazi. He is busy and cannot be disturbed.

Naaman. But I have come from the land of Syria that he might heal me.

Gehazi. Yes, my lord.

Naaman. I am Naaman, captain of the armies of the king of Syria.

Gehazi. Yes, my lord.

Naaman. Does the prophet know who is here?

Gehazi. Yes, my lord.

Naaman. Then why does he not come to me?

Gehazi. I have told you; he is busy.

Naaman. Will he not even try to help me?

Gehazi. I have already told you his message. Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and you shall be cured.

Naaman. That is ridiculous. Does he think to make fun of me?

Gehazi. Not so, my lord. He would help you.

Naaman. Then why does he not come to me; and call upon the name of his God here before me and touch the leprosy on my body and make me well?

Gehazi. The prophet is not like other men, he works in his own way.

Naaman. Well, I don't like his way. [*To soldiers.*] Back to Samaria!

First Soldier. Will not my lord go to the Jordan as the prophet said?

Naaman. Go down into that muddy river? What good would it do? If I must bathe in a river why did he not send me to one of the rivers of Damascus which are clean and sweet? No, we return to Samaria. [*Starts to leave stage.*

First Soldier. My lord, listen to me. If the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it if it could have cured you of your leprosy?

Naaman. I was ready to do anything however hard or to pay any price however great if only he would take away this hideous disease.

First Soldier. Then why do you refuse to do as the prophet said?

Naaman. He has insulted me.

First Soldier. Because he told you to do something easy?

Naaman. Because he told me to do a silly, disgusting act.

First Soldier. He but said, wash and be clean.

Naaman. In the river Jordan with its clay and mud! I'll not do it. Come, let us waste no more time. [*Starts to leave stage.*

First Soldier. One more question, my lord. Are you going to return to your king and tell him that you refused to do what the prophet said because it was too easy?

Naaman. Too easy?

First Soldier. Does it not seem foolish to ride so far to ask help of the prophet and then to refuse to do what he said? You have to ride through the Jordan in order to cross to the other side. Why not stop and bathe as the prophet has said?

Naaman. [*After a moment's pause.*] But what good would it do?

First Soldier. I do not know. But it is the prophet's command. If he had told you to do some great thing you would have done it. Then why not obey when he says, "Wash and be clean"?

Naaman. You are right. I will at least do as the prophet said, for I will do anything to be cured of this leprosy. Ugh! Come, let us go to the Jordan.

[*Exeunt all but Gehazi.*

[*Gehazi watches until men are out of sight and noise of their departure has ceased. Smiles, shakes head as if unable to understand.*

Elisha. [*Off-stage.*] Gehazi.

Gehazi. [*Quickly.*] Yes, my lord, I am coming.

[*Exit Gehazi.*

CURTAIN

ACT IV

PLACE: *Same as Act III. An hour later.*

[*Noise, off-stage, of men approaching. Enter men. Excitement prevails. All are talking, exclaiming, except Naaman, who is quiet and thoughtful.*

Second Soldier. Can it be true, my lord?

Naaman. [*Extending hands.*] Look at my hands.

Third Soldier. As clean and white as a child's!

Fourth Soldier. Even your face and neck are clearer.

First Soldier. Not a sign of leprosy was to be seen on your body after the seventh time you dipped in the Jordan.

Naaman. And to think that I almost refused to go down the seventh time! Every time when I came up out of the water I looked carefully at my hands. The first time I saw no change; they were still disfigured. I thought it would take two or three washings before I saw a change, but when after the third, the fourth and the fifth times there was no change all hope died within me. I looked carefully after the sixth time. When I saw no improvement I became angry. I thought the prophet was making sport of me. I said to myself, I'll not be a fool and go in again. [*To First Soldier.*] Then you touched my arm and said, "Just once more," and I went. When I came out I was like this.

Second Soldier. Shall I call the prophet?

Naaman. No, no, do not disturb him. He is busy. I will wait here until he shall come out, for I cannot

return home without thanking him. He is a mighty man of God. [*Enter Elisha.*

Elisha. Naaman.

Naaman. My lord the prophet! I came to you a leper, now I stand before you a well man. I know now that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel. Take these presents I have brought you.

[*Soldiers come forward with gifts.*

Elisha. I want no present. What I do is not for silver or gold, but to glorify God.

Naaman. I believe that, but the gifts will show you how grateful I am.

Elisha. I know already.

Naaman. May I not leave the money for you to use as you need it?

Elisha. Once more I tell you, I will take no gifts from you. Now return home and show the king of Syria that Israel knows a power greater than his.

Naaman. The power of the living God. From now on I shall worship only the Lord God of Israel.

Elisha. Go in peace. [*Exit Elisha.*

[*Naaman and soldiers make ready to leave.*

First Soldier. We shall never forget this day.

Second Soldier. Nor this strange prophet.

Naaman. Blessing and peace be upon him. He has made me a well man, even as the Hebrew maid said he would. Haste, let us return to Syria with all speed.

[*Exeunt men.*

CURTAIN

XII: THE LOST COIN

The Parable

"Then drew near unto him [Jesus] all the publicans and sinners for to hear him . . . and he spake this parable unto them, saying, . . .

What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it?

And when she hath found it she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which was lost.

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." —*Luke* XV, 1-10.

Dramatization

CHARACTERS:

Elizabeth, *who is soon to be married.*
Rachel, Hannah, Rebecca } *friends of Elizabeth.*
Amnah, *a maiden who sings.*
Servant, *a woman.*

PLACE:

Act I. Home of Elizabeth's father.
Act II. Home of Elizabeth.

ACT I

PLACE: *Oriental room. Elizabeth stands near a table arranging garments, veils and jewels. Sound of voices off-stage. Elizabeth goes to entrance.*

Elizabeth. Enter for ye are very welcome.

[*Enter group of young women.*

Rachel. Gladly have we come in answer to thy summons.

Hannah. Aye, scarcely could we wait until this hour, for we knew that thou hadst much to tell us.

Rebecca. And to show us.

Elizabeth. The day of my marriage draweth nigh.

Hannah. So we thought.

Elizabeth. I would show you a part of my dowry, the garments which my parents have provided and the gifts which have been added.

Rebecca. Most happy shall we be to see them.

Elizabeth. Many of them are here.

[*Advances to table. Girls follow and exclaim as they see the garments.*

Elizabeth. [*Holds up a garment.*] This my father bought from a merchant of Joppa. Is it not beautiful?

Rachel. Never have I seen so beautiful a one.

Rebecca. I pray thee, put it on that we may see it better.

Elizabeth. Gladly will I do so, for I am greatly pleased with it. [*Puts on the garment.*

Girls. [*Touch and admire it.*] Oh, it is beautiful!

Hannah. Thou art a fortunate maiden.

Elizabeth. My father hath been most generous.

Look at these veils which he hath found for me. [*Holds up veils of different colors. Girls exclaim.*]

Rachel. Let us see thee in them.

[*The girls drape a veil about Elizabeth, laughing and talking as they work.*

Rebecca. Thou wilt be a lovely bride.

Elizabeth. Here are my jewels and ornaments. [*Shows beads, rings and ornaments.*]

Rachel. [*Looking at them.*] Can a maid forget her ornaments or a bride her attire?

[*Enter maiden with musical instrument. She takes her place at a distance and begins to play softly.*

Elizabeth. Oh, here is Amnah. Will ye please make yourselves comfortable while we enjoy the refreshment that has been provided.

[*Girls sit on floor. Enter servant with refreshments which she serves. Girls talk and laugh as they eat.*

Hannah. Thy dowry is ample. Surely thou art well provided for.

Elizabeth. The linens for my house are in yonder chest. I will show them to you later.

Rebecca. Jacob will find in thee a good housewife as well as a handsome bride.

Rachel. Ah, Jacob! We have not yet spoken of him. What sayeth he about thy lovely garments?

Elizabeth. He hath not seen them. He must wait until after I am his wife. Already he hath brought me his gift. I have saved it to show you last, for of all my things it is the most precious. Pray, excuse me and I will fetch it.

Rachel. Elizabeth is favored.

Rebecca. Her lines are fallen in pleasant places.

Hannah. May happiness crown her way!

Rachel. Sing for us, Amnah, until thy mistress shall return.

[*Amnah sings a song of love.*

Rachel. Thank thee, Amnah. Thy song is sweet.

[*Elizabeth enters. Girls stand.*

Elizabeth. [*Displays a necklace made of ten pieces of silver strung on a cord.*] See my bridal piece!

Rebecca. Ten pieces of silver!

Hannah. The gift of gifts for a bride.

Elizabeth. Of all my gifts this is the most precious. I would rather be robbed of my entire dowry than of one of these pieces of silver. [*Holds chain about her neck.*] Is it not lovely?

Girls. Aye, it is indeed.

[*Girls gather near as if to examine it more closely. Elizabeth moves a step or two away.*

Elizabeth. Ye may *look* at it, but I cannot allow any one but myself to touch it.

Rachel. [*To Rebecca.*] How pleased she is with Jacob's gift!

Rebecca. It is beautiful.

Hannah. It is a rare and costly necklace.

Elizabeth. It is not its beauty or its value that makes it precious to me though I know it is both beautiful and costly. To me its real value lies in the fact that it is my marriage piece, a symbol of Jacob's love.

Hannah. [*To Rachel.*] How dearly she loves him!

Rebecca. Thou dost deserve great happiness.

Hannah. Surely thou wilt have it for Jacob is a godly man and his ways are just and honorable.

Elizabeth. He is good, and precious is his gift. [*Looks admiringly at necklace.*] Pray excuse me

while I restore this to a place of safety for I dare not leave it with my other gifts.

[*Exit Elizabeth. Amnah plays softly. Girls are silent and thoughtful. After a brief interval Elizabeth returns, girls rise and make ready to depart. Each takes her farewell of Elizabeth. The music continues until curtain falls.*

Rebecca. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it.

Rachel. Whosoever findeth a wife findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor of the Lord.

Hannah. A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband.

All. Blessing and honor be upon thee and upon thy home.

Elizabeth. These words are tender and beautiful, and my heart rejoiceth in them. The remembrance of them will ever make me glad.

[*Exeunt Rebecca, Hannah, Rachel. For a moment Elizabeth stands in silence gazing after them.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

Some months later. Announcement should be made of the passing of time. Elizabeth is married and in her own home. With an air of great anxiety she searches the room carefully by the aid of a lighted candle, then sweeps the corners of the floor in an effort to find the lost cain. The pantomime continues for a moment or two, then a knocking is heard at the door.

Elizabeth. Enter. [*Enter girls.*] Ye are come at a sorrowful time.

Rebecca. What is thy sorrow?

Hannah. What aileth thee?

Rachel. What hath happened to disturb thy peace?

Rebecca and Hannah. Yea, tell us thy anxiety.

Elizabeth. It is indeed great. I have lost one of the silver pieces from my necklace. [*Holds up necklace showing the nine pieces.*]

Rebecca. Thy marriage piece?

Elizabeth. Yea, my marriage piece.

Hannah. [*Steps to Elizabeth and counts aloud as she indicates each piece.*] One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, *nine.* Verily, one is missing.

Elizabeth. Help me to find it. Diligently have I searched but all my efforts have been in vain. Now, once again, I will sweep the room, for, perchance, the coin hath rolled into a corner and lies hidden. [*Elizabeth continues her sweeping. Girls search for coin.*]

Rachel. Art thou sure it is in this house?

Elizabeth. Yea. Only a day ago I wore the necklace, and then it was complete. This morning I put it on and not long ago, when I removed it from my neck, I discovered that one piece was missing. Oh, I must find it. [*Begins diligently to search the corners. After a moment she stoops quickly over and exclaims.*] Ah!

All. Hast thou found it?

Elizabeth. [*Rises and holds up the coin.*] Behold, my lost coin! Rejoice, rejoice with me; for I have found the piece that was lost.

Hannah. Rejoice, rejoice; she hath found the one that was lost.

Rebecca. We all rejoice with thee.

Rachel. Indeed we do.

[*All gather about Elizabeth.*

Hannah. It is a lovely piece.

Elizabeth. Somehow it seemeth more beautiful to me than any of the others.

Rebecca. Joy hath come to this home again.

Rachel. And to the heart of Elizabeth.

Elizabeth. I have found the piece that was lost. I must put it safely away with the others. [*Puts it in box.*] I could never have been happy again had I not found it. Of all my possessions these ten pieces are the most precious and had one been missing my sorrow would have been great.

Rachel. Yet thou wouldst have had nine pieces left.

Elizabeth. Even so, I should have been thinking always of the one that was lost. I could not have given up the search until it was found.

Rebecca. But now thy sorrow hath been turned into joy. Let us rejoice and be glad.

[*Girls take hold of hands and dance joyfully about, singing.*

All. Rejoice, rejoice, the lost is found, lost is found, lost is found. Rejoice, rejoice, the lost is found.

CURTAIN

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